

## THE LITTLE BURGLAR.

Williams, William L

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### THE LITTLE BURGLAR.

BY WILLIAM L. WILLIAMS.

ONE summer afternoon, James Bradbury was walking along a road which led to the town where he lived. He had been to a neighboring town on an errand for his father, and had decided to walk back, instead of waiting an hour for the cars. It was a long and lonely walk, and he had travelled about one-third of the way, when he expressed a wish that he had somebody for company. The wish was hardly uttered, before it was granted; for, on a rock by the roadside, James espied a boy eating some crackers and cheese, and evidently enjoying himself. James recognized him immediately as being John Ray, Squire McAllister's new boy. Squire McAllister was a wealthy lawyer, who lived in the largest house in Hampton, and this John Ray was a boy he had recently hired to look after his horse and cow, and do the odd chores about the house. Like James, he had been on an errand, and was now on his way home. The crackers and cheese were his dinner. He had taken them in his pocket, and this

was the first chance he had had to eat them.

"Halloo, Jim! Is that you?" was his greeting, when James Bradbury had approached near enough to hear a salutation.

"It isn't anybody else," replied James, a little surprised to hear himself so familiarly addressed by one he had little or no acquaintance with.

"Your name is Jim Bradbury, isn't it?" was Ray's next question.

"Yes."

"I thought so. I heard the boys call you Jim, and I saw you go into old Bradbury's house every day. My name is Ray—John Ray, and I work for old McAllister," said the boy.

"I know you do," remarked James, not much pleased at hearing his father called "old Bradbury."

"I don't like the place much, but it will do until I find something better to do. The old man is too mean," said Ray.

"I always thought Squire McAllister was a very nice kind of a man," said James.

"I don't think so. He sent me away over to Craft's Corner, to drive a cow that he sold a man, and all he gave me for dinner was a dozen crackers and a piece of cheese. Isn't that rather stingy?" asked John.

"What should you have liked?" inquired James.

"O, it would have been handsome in him to have given me a dollar bill, and let me get my dinner at Craft's Corner. A fellow needs a good dinner, after walking most thirteen miles. I found out one thing by going, anyhow." And John rose from the rock, brushed the crumbs from his trousers, and walked along with James.

"What was it?" inquired his companion.

"I found a place where the raspberries grow as thick as—as lasty-pudding, and big ones, too—regular stunners! I could fill a water-pail in half an hour. Will you go to-morrow and pick 'em with me?" said Ray.

"Raspberries! Yes, I'll go to-morrow afternoon, if I can get away," said James, feeling as if he had no right to make an agreement, without the consent of his father or mother.

"Then you'll promise to go, will you?" asked Ray.

"Yes—I'll go, any way," replied James.

"Enough said. I will meet you at the tannery to-morrow afternoon, at two o'clock, and we'll go right to the place; and I tell you what 'tis, Jim, you'll be glad you went. By the way, what does your father do for a living? He is in a bank, isn't he?"

"Yes. He is cashier of the Soap-Bubble National Bank," was the reply.

"Has plenty of money to handle every day, I suppose?" continued Ray.

"Yes; he is paying it out and taking it in all the time," replied James.

"Where do they put all the money when it comes night?" inquired Ray.

"O, they have a great iron safe built right in the wall, and all the money is put in there and locked up. Father keeps the key," answered James.

"Carries it home with him, don't he?" asked Ray.

"Certainly. He wouldn't be so foolish as to leave it in the bank," answered James.

"I wouldn't want to have a bank key in my trousers pocket all night. I should be afraid that a burglar would get into the house and try to steal it," remarked John.

"He doesn't let it stay in his pocket all night. There is a little drawer in the dressing-table, and it is put in there. A thief would never think of looking there for it," said James.

John Ray seemed to be well satisfied with the ease with which he pumped his companion, and it was not long before he had acquainted himself with all the minute particulars of the bank key and its customary whereabouts. At the same time, he made himself so agreeable to James, that the latter thought him one of the best boys he had ever known. Boys are easily deceived as to acquaintances, and when left to their own selection, almost always make some mistake.

The next morning, while Mr. Bradbury and his family were at breakfast, they heard a loud shouting in the street, as if some one was attempting to drive an obstinate cow.

"Who is that, making such a noise?" inquired Mr. Bradbury.

"It is that boy of Squire McAllister's; he is driving the cow to pasture. I don't know what his name is. Perhaps Jimmy knows?" And Margaret turned to her brother, inquiringly.

"His name is John Ray," said James.

"I wonder where McAllister picked up such a boy as that. I don't like his looks at all," said Mr. Bradbury. "I do hope that you will not get acquainted with him, James."

James felt rather uncomfortable, after this remark; but he remained silent, giving all his attention to the breakfast.

"How did you find out his name, Jimmy?" asked his sister.

"I heard that was his name," replied James.

"Let that satisfy you, then," said his father; "for I do not wish you to add him to your list of playmates. At any rate, wait till he is better known in town. Do you hear, James?"

"Yes sir," replied the son; and he tried to hide his face in a teacup, so burning red it felt.

His sister noticed it, and wishing to relieve his confusion, not knowing why it was, said:

"I do not think James will care anything about John Ray; he has plenty of playfellows already, and I believe they are all well behaved and respectable."

Mr. Bradbury said no more, but soon

afterwards took his hat and went to his business.

James sat for some moments, thinking over his father's words. He thought it was unreasonable to forbid his associating with a boy no one knew anything against. He had promised to be at the tannery, and he tried to persuade himself that it would be as wrong to break his promise to John Ray as it would to disobey his father. He wanted to go for the berries; he had been thinking of it ever since it was first proposed, and now he could see no good reason for giving it up. If John Ray proved to be a bad boy, it would be very easy to quit going with him; but it did not seem fair to judge a boy without a trial. This was the argument James used to convince himself that it would be perfectly right to keep his engagement with Ray, in spite of his father's commands. Boys do not reflect that they must not question their parents' reasons for requesting obedience. One of the most dangerous things a child can do is to disobey father or mother. It has made many a life miserable, which would have been happy, besides incurring the displeasure of God, by breaking one of his holy commandments.

The forenoon was far from being a happy one to James Bradbury. He once decided to go to his father's store, and tell him the whole affair and abide by his decision; his mother was visiting at her sister's in another town, and there was no one in the house but his sister Margaret. He determined to ask her advice; she was ten years older than he, and had always lent a willing ear to all his trouble, and assisted him out of them. He found her in the parlor, but she had some visitors, and he could not speak to her before them. This was unfortunate, for Margaret would soon have influenced him aright, and saved him from the penalty of disobedience. He did not wait for her, but set out to meet John Ray at the appointed hour, at the tannery.

He was a little early, but the leisure time was spent in looking about the tannery, and seeing the hides in the various stages of being tanned. One of the men cut off a piece of leather for him, it was about as large as a silver dollar. James cut it into a circular form, and putting a string through the centre he made a very good "sucker." By wetting it, and laying it on a large stone or brick he could lift them easily. While

amusing himself with this, John Ray came along.

"Halloo, Jim! You are here before me. Where's your basket?" was John's first remark on seeing his companion.

"I didn't bring any basket. I was afraid some one would see me and want to know where I was going," replied James.

"Well, no matter. Mine is a pretty big one, and I guess it will do for both of us. Come, we must hurry," and the boys hastened along.

It was a long walk to the spot where Ray had seen the raspberries growing so luxuriantly. They crossed a number of fields, made their way through a thick wood, and finally came to a rocky ridge where the berries, red, ripe and luscious, hung brilliantly from the slender vines. They immediately commenced filling the basket. At first it was very pleasant, but before a great while they were tired, and decided to leave the basket hanging to the limb of an oak tree, while they roamed about.

"Lend me your knife, Jim," said John, stopping at a young sappling which was growing straight and strong from the ground; "I want this for a cane."

James put his hand into his pocket and drew forth the knife, and handed it to John. At the same instant a small brass key fell to the ground, the long soft moss preventing its fall from being heard. Ray saw it, and calling James's attention to some distant object he stooped quickly and put the key in his pocket. It was the doorkey to Mr. Bradbury's house, and John knew it, for he had seen James use it. A short time after this the boys came to a deep ravine, on the opposite side of which the steep rocks rose to quite a height above their heads. Right across from where they stood a wide ledge was formed in the precipice, and a fallen tree made a bridge over it. The boys saw it, and each expressed a desire to go across to the ledge upon it. By skillful maneuvering John managed to get James over first. The feat was done successfully, the tree being perfectly strong and safe; but the end only rested a very few inches on the ledge, and as soon as James was safely over John pulled the tree in such a manner that the end slipped off, and the whole bridge went into the ravine with a loud crash. James saw this movement with consternation, for it made him a prisoner on the ledge with no chance of escape. John pretended

to be very sorry, and after numerous suggestions he said he would go for help.

Now John's real intention was to rob the Soap-Bubble Bank, and it was for this reason that he had struck up such an intimacy with James Bradbury, and decoyed him away from home on purpose to get the door-key from him. By good luck this had fallen into his hands without any trouble, and with it he intended to enter the house at night and steal the key of the bank safe. In order to insure his getting in, he called at Mr. Bradbury's, and told Miss Margaret that her brother James would spend the evening with a friend named David Manks, and would not be at home till about eleven o'clock. This story was believed, and the main lock of the door was not locked, so that James could enter with his nightkey.

John Ray kept good watch, and when he saw all the lights extinguished, save the hall lamp, he knew that Mr. Bradbury and the family had gone to their beds. He then opened the front door carefully and entered. Up the staircase he crept, and waited at the chamber door until by the breathing within he was sure that the cashier was asleep. He then tried the chamber door; it opened, and the young rogue soon found the little drawer, and the key was in it. Quickly and noiselessly he transferred it to his pocket, and turned to leave the room; but to his horror a white figure stood in the doorway; the culprit's knees smote together with fear, and he could feel his hair rising on end. The figure advanced toward him; he stepped hastily back, stumbled over a foot-

stool, and, unable to recover his balance, he fell with all his weight upon Mr. Bradbury who was soundly slumbering in the bed. At the same instant a piercing shriek was heard, and the ghost added to the general consternation by falling on the floor. Mr. Bradbury was wide awake in an instant, and had John Ray firmly in his grasp; he then rang the bell violently, and soon had the servants at hand. The ghost proved to be Margaret Bradbury, who was sometimes given to somnambulism, and on this occasion was walking in her sleep. The noise that John made in falling, awakened her, and the fright she received at finding herself in such an unexpected place, caused her to scream and faint.

John Ray confessed his wicked plot, and begged for mercy. He told where he had left James, but nothing could be done towards releasing him till morning. The bad boy was securely locked up for the remainder of the night; when morning came he showed the way to James's room. The poor boy had passed the night in crying and lamenting. He was overjoyed at seeing his father again. A bridge was soon arranged, and he was released from his prison.

John Ray was punished for his wickedness by long imprisonment in the penitentiary at hard labor. James Bradbury never saw him again; but he never forgot him nor the fearful night he passed on that lonely and dangerous ledge. It was a heavy punishment for disobedience, but it had a good effect, for ever after that James was careful to do nothing without his parent's sanction.

## THE POWER OF CONSCIENCE.

BY JAMES DABNEY.

Mrs. JENKINS was fond of sight-seeing, and her husband was equally fond of gratifying her fancy. But Mrs. Jenkins had the bad taste to always deck herself in her finest apparel and with her handsomest jewels on such occasions. She by no means believed that modesty and simplicity are the most beautiful features in a woman's dress, and her practice always accorded with her belief.

One evening she accompanied her husband to a public meeting. She was dressed more richly than usual, and had noticed before starting that the guard of her watch-chain was broken, but resisting the advice of her husband to leave the watch at home, she wore it, thinking that she would notice it closely during the evening.

As she was leaving the hall after the close of the meeting, she felt for her watch. It was gone.

"William," she exclaimed, in alarm, "I have lost my watch."

"I feared you would," said her husband. "You may have dropped it in the hall. Come, let us go back and look for it."

They returned to the hall, and a search was made for the watch, but it could not be found. Hastening home, Mrs. Jenkins searched through her clothing, but could not find it! The watch was gone, and it was vain to search for it. It had either been stolen from her during the evening, or been dropped in the hall, and picked up by some one. This much was plain, however, the watch was gone. An advertisement was inserted in the daily papers, describing the loss, and offering a handsome reward for the return of the property. This, too, was ineffectual. The watch was not heard from, and Mrs. Jenkins remained overwhelmed with grief.

Two years passed away, and Mrs. Jenkins had provided herself with a new watch and chain, having given up all hope of ever hearing from the missing articles. One morning, in glancing over one of the daily newspapers, she chanced to see this advertisement:

"If the lady who, two years ago, lost a gold watch and chain at the — Hall, will

send her address to A. B., City Post-office, she will hear something to her advantage."

Mrs. Jenkins could scarcely believe that she was the person alluded to in this advertisement; nevertheless, she resolved to ascertain if she were. She at once enclosed her address to the party, and, without mentioning the matter to her husband, awaited a reply.

The next day a private carriage stopped before her door, and a lady, dressed in deep mourning, and closely veiled, alighted from it, and rang the doorbell. She asked to see Mrs. Jenkins, and was shown into the parlor. When Mrs. Jenkins entered, she rose, and without removing her veil, said, with quiet dignity:

"Mrs. Jenkins, I presume?"

"Yes," replied that lady; "and may I ask to whom I am indebted for this visit?"

"I must beg to be permitted to refrain from mentioning my name," said the lady. "I am here on an errand of justice, and it is most probable that we may never meet again. Therefore I would rather remain unknown to you."

"As you please," said Mrs. Jenkins. "I suppose your visit is in relation to the watch and chain which I was so unfortunate as to lose two years ago."

"It is," replied the lady.

"Can you tell me any means by which I can recover it? I am willing to pay a liberal reward for it."

"I desire no reward," said the lady, "and I have come, not only to tell you of your lost property, but to restore it on one condition."

"I grant the condition," exclaimed Mrs. Jenkins, eagerly, "provided it is not unreasonable."

"It is simply this: that upon receiving the articles again, you let the matter remain silent."

"That I readily promise," said Mrs. Jenkins. "I suppose the person that took them from me naturally desires to be unmolested. I shall be perfectly satisfied with the return of my property."

The lady handed Mrs. Jenkins her long-

lost watch and chain. Nothing was missing. Everything was in as complete order as when she had last worn them.

"Everything is there, I believe," said the lady.

"Yes," replied Mrs. Jenkins, "everything is perfect. Will you tell me how you knew they were mine?"

"I was told so by the person from whom I received them."

"Did that person take the articles from me?"

"No, you lost them, and they were found."

"Then why were they not returned to me sooner?"

"I may as well tell you the whole story," said the lady, after a pause. "You will never know any of the parties concerned; and I see no harm in telling you.

"Two years ago you attended a public meeting, in company with your husband. You wore the watch and chain which I have just restored to you. It seems that the guard which held the chain to your dress was broken, and this, I suppose, accounts for your losing it. Sitting near you was a gentleman of wealth and position, but who was then greatly harassed by pecuniary difficulties. He had gone to this meeting to obtain relief from his distressing thoughts. He knew your husband by sight, and in this way knew you. After the meeting was over, and as he was going away, he noticed a handsome gold watch and chain lying on the floor where you had been sitting. As it was a lady's watch, he at once supposed it to be yours. He picked it up, and looked around for you, to restore it to you, but you had gone. Putting it in his pocket, he left the hall, intending to call at your house the next day and return it; but, during the evening he thought he would sell the watch, use the money in the effort to recover from his business troubles, for every cent was of great value to him then, and, when he had fairly recovered, present you with a better and handsomer watch and chain, in the place of that which you lost. At last he de-

termined to adopt this plan, and the next day started out for the purpose of selling the watch. His conscience reproached him so sorely, however, that he turned aside before reaching the place where he intended to make the sale, and concluded to postpone it until later in the day. He started out a few hours later on the same errand, but with the same result. Something, he could not tell what, seemed to hold him back, and prevent him from disposing of the watch. He would start out frequently with a firm determination to sell the watch, but each time his conscience would reproach him so greatly that he always abandoned his plan. This continued for several months, and at last the gentleman resolved to throw the watch away, and with it end the whole matter. Each time he did so his conscience restrained him even more powerfully than when he wished to sell the watch.

"At last he carefully sealed up the articles, and deposited them in his safe. He succeeded in getting through his difficulties, and in maintaining his mercantile position."

"Why didn't he return the articles, and have done with them?" asked Mrs. Jenkins.

"He was ashamed to do so," replied the lady. "It was a sore subject to him, and he never enjoyed much peace after the watch came into his hands. A short while ago he died. On his deathbed he revealed to his wife the history of the watch, and begged her to return it to you. At her desire I am here to-day to discharge this duty. The gentleman of whom I have been speaking was a dear friend of mine, and I knew him to be a good and upright man. In a moment of weakness he yielded to a great temptation, and was only kept from a greater sin by the strong power of conscience."

As the lady ceased speaking, she rose, and bidding Mrs. Jenkins good-morning, took her departure. Mrs. Jenkins respected her promise, and never sought to know the name of the man whose story she had heard; but she always believed the lady who returned her watch to be his wife.

## THE STORM CHILD.

Lowell, Mary A

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### THE STORM CHILD.

BY MARY A. LOWELL.

A LONG line of sea view lay before the windows of "Beach Cottage," as old Captain Horace Greenwood had christened his pretty house on the shore. A splendid sight, indeed, those long and broad windows commanded, when on a calm summer day, when the waves were hushed to slumber, and the white sails glided by, unruffled by the wind, or when they were lashed into fury by the wild storms of winter, playing fearfully with human life, and bringing darkness and desolation to human hearts and pleasant homes.

Captain Horace, as he was familiarly called by the inhabitants of Southport, had traversed the seas for forty years; had been more than ordinarily fortunate, and had now built the pretty Beach Cottage, from which he could always behold the scene of his former labors, and had settled himself down to a quiet life.

He had married late. His wife was also advanced in life. No children were born to them, but not a child within a mile of his home that did not love Captain Horace and

his kind-hearted genial wife. Seldom a day passed that they did not entertain *somebody's* little one; and there was always some foreign delicacy, brought to the captain by the friends of his sea life, or the gift of some young sailor whom he had befriended; and, on these occasions, it was brought out to please the little guests.

Sheltered from the north by a long and high brick wall, the captain's grape vines and fruit trees gave out their treasures abundantly; not kept for selfish purposes, but generously shared with others. The neighborhood had never been so gay and cheerful as since he had taken up his abode at Beach Cottage.

A little room at the very top of the cottage, with windows on all sides, was his favorite resort. Here he had mounted a very good telescope, and here he would watch the passing ships, while Mrs. Greenwood would sit by him with her work.

She, too, loved the ocean. She had been with her husband on two or three long voyages, and had learned to delight in the

various moods the sea assumed. Fear had no place in her mind, if Captain Horace was near her. She had such confidence in his skill, that she had never a thought of foreboding during her voyages.

And now, settled down beside him, in their pleasant home, she was perfectly happy. The captain boasted that his wife had no "nerves." If she possessed them, they were never troublesome. Calm and serene as a May morning, she was ready for any emergency, and so, was the efficient friend of the entire neighborhood—it might be said of the entire town of Southport.

Near there lived another son of Ocean, Captain John Harrod. Though not as fortunate in money matters as his neighbor, John Harrod possessed treasures which were denied to Captain Horace. His house literally swarmed with children—a host which he could have but scantily fed, had it not been for the rich gifts of the sea, which he almost daily brought in his little boat, for his table. How often he blessed God for this rich boon from the depths of that ocean which, in some respects, had been niggardly to the industrious old sailor. Many a fine fish, too, found its way to Captain Horace, and many a bright silver coin was dropped into the little pocket of his young namesake, Horace Harrod, in return. And various other mutual kindnesses and attentions had bound the neighbors together in peaceful and happy fellowship, in which the two wives bore their full part.

As John Harrod's boys grew up, Captain Horace interested himself in their welfare, and found them employment; most of them preferring their father's former occupation, despite his ill-fortune in following it.

On one snowy and dismal afternoon Harrod entered his neighbor's house, and went straight up to the room that held the telescope. The captain heard his footstep, and followed quickly.

"There will be a terrible storm soon, Horace," said the visitor, his hand trembling a little as it sought to adjust the instrument to his eye.

"Maybe, and maybe not," was the captain's answer.

He knew that Harrod was daily expecting one of his sons—Sidney, who was his mother's darling, and that a storm could scarcely fail to prove fatal to him, if he were unable to keep off the shore.

Already the sea had assumed a threaten-

ing aspect, like that which she ever puts on when she calls her victims to their destruction.

Over the whole sweep of the bay the waves were black and gloomy-looking, save where the edges were tipped with white foam that leaped high in fury, while, far out beyond the surf, the sea spread out its dark green troubled waters, unbroken by a single grow.

For hours, the two men had watched, alternately, through the telescope, for some coming sail. They knew that if any vessel were near enough to hope that the run might be made before the darkness should come on, it would surely be attempted. But now, night was closing in rapidly, and they hoped that none had been near.

Slowly they felt their way down the stairs to the cheerful sitting-room, where Mrs. Greenwood had already lighted her bright astral lamp, and had placed another, as was her constant custom, in the window, as a beacon.

Every sailor on the coast knew "the Greenwood beacon light;" for it had shone there every night since the captain's house was built.

The table was laid for tea, and Harrod yielded to the attractions of hot biscuit, cold chicken and dainty marmalade, though almost ashamed to stay while his family were supping at home, on such meagre fare as they could afford.

"Run home for your wife, John," was the captain's command, when he saw his hesitation; and John waited not for a second bidding. He ran along the little garden that separated the houses, and soon returned with Mrs. Harrod, and they drank their tea with many a heartfelt expression of hope that nothing should come near the coast that stormy night.

A noise like that of a gun smote their ears as they spoke—a dull muffled sound, that started them quickly from the table, and sent them, with white lips and throbbing hearts, to the windows, where only deepest darkness answered their asking eyes.

It was long before their anxiety found a voice. Then the silence was broken by Captain Greenwood, who said, fervently, in a reverential tone, "God help the poor sailors, this bitter night!"

Already the ground was covered deeply with snow, and the storm was increasing with frightful rapidity. The wind howled



and groaned hideously, tossing the snow into drifts, and blocking up doors and windows. The beacon light alone threw a single ray across the wide beach, revealing the blackness that lay beyond its reach.

"I cannot stay here, while men may be perishing near us!" was the exclamation of John Harrod, as he put on his weather-stained jacket, heavy with so many salt drenchings. The captain said not a word, but, disappearing from the room as if to wait on his friend out, he, too, departed for the beach.

The two sat down upon a great rock from which the snow had been blown away, and with the salt spray and fierce storm half blinding their eyes, peered out into the darkness.

They had sat thus for only a short time, when fires were lighted along the beach—fires which it seemed mockery to kindle, since they were perpetually being put out by the storm. At last, they succeeded in uniting them all in a single blaze, so powerful as to defy the power of the wind to extinguish—fresh combustibles being added every moment, in large quantities. Streaming far over the waves, the light revealed the spectre of a ship. Sounds of distress came to their ears, telling the fearful tale of hopeless shipwreck and, perhaps, doomed lives.

"O, for a lifeboat!" exclaimed John Harrod. "How can I sit here, with folded hands, and do nothing for the poor suffering souls yonder?"

"But you cannot help them now, and it would be perfect suicide to attempt it. Bear it bravely, old friend! It may not be your son who is struggling there. There are a dozen vessels expected, and it may be that this one is not his. Keep up a good heart, John. There is hope yet."

"Don't speak to me, Horace; I cannot bear it now."

John moved his seat further from his friend, as if to enforce his words; but, as he did so, a terrible crash was heard above the awful sound of the storm, that almost stopped his heart-beats. He returned to the spot he had first left, and laid his trembling hand upon the shoulder of his old comrade.

"That was my Sidney's deathblow, Horace," he murmured, hoarsely. "God help his poor mother! for her heart will be broken for the dear boy."

"Wait and hope, John; wait and hope. There were strong swimmers in that ship, undoubtedly, and Sidney has breasted the waves from his childhood. Don't be disheartened yet. See!" he said, as the watchfires showed a long line of men upon the beach, with ropes ready to throw out seaward, "see, the men are doing their best. Let us trust that they may yet save the poor fellows yonder."

The vessel, whatever it might be, had certainly broken in pieces, and those on board had been committed to the mercies of the great deep. Some had availed themselves of a piece of board, a bit of spar, or a bale of cotton. Others, strong and active swimmers, had thrown off superfluous clothing, and were fighting with the angry ocean for their lives.

One brave and gentle youth, with a knightly spirit and noble self-sacrifice, had taken a little child in his arms, as tenderly as a nurse takes an infant, and, at the risk of his life, was buffeting the wild waves with the strength needed for the occasion.

The child's father and mother had both perished in the first great plunge from the ship's deck. She had seen their death, and now clung to that brave youth as if he were her last friend.

The fierce waves bore him onward, with his burden of human life. One arm was around her, the other buffeted the frightful billows with a strength born of heroic courage. Once or twice, he found her weight leaning heavily against his arm, as if worn out with the terrible struggle; but it did not stay his exertions. Dead or alive, he was bound to bring her to the shore, or perish in the attempt.

They neared the beach—the child and her boyish preserver. One desperate effort more, and he would save her. It was made, and they lay upon the sands, exhausted and motionless. One strong red glow from the watchfire played on the girl's white arm, and touched it with a fiery tint. A fisherman saw it, and bore the still unconscious forms further up the beach, laying them at the very feet of Captain Horace and his friend, who had marked the struggle for life, and had already identified the form of Sidney Harrod. The lad had not fainted, but exhaustion had made him silent. He knew at whose feet he lay, but it was impossible for him to speak or move. His father's hands were busily employed in rub-

bling him, and a kind fisherman brought him some wine and a warm coat to wrap his drenched form.

Meanwhile, Captain Horace had raised the child in his arms, and, wrapping her in his own "dreadnought," had carried her to his own house.

Never had the orderly house of Mrs. Greenwood been thrown into such confusion as now. The water dripped from the child's garments on the carpet, and the pretty damask couch bore marks of wet that never wholly disappeared. But the good lady saw not and cared not, when she saw the blue eyes open, and heard the long sigh that betrayed that life was still busy beneath those eyelids and within that heart. Her good husband looked on delightedly at the success of her simple but effectual remedies.

The child was a little creature, slight and short—hardly the size of one of eight years old, although she was really eleven. Her eyes and hair were beautiful; but except for these, she was plain, and even homely. Her hair was of a chestnut brown, and, after the seawater had been washed away, hung in bright shining curls—so long as to nearly hide the defect of the right shoulder that had grown out. The face, homely as it was, beamed with a sweet expression, and the blue eyes danced with good-nature, though sometimes overflowing with tears, when she spoke of her dead parents. She knew of no relatives. Her father had once been rich, *she said*, but was quite poor when they sailed. He had taken passage to this country, hoping to be more fortunate here.

So much of the family history Captain Greenwood gathered from the little girl, when she awoke the next morning without a trace of the exhaustion and fatigue of the night. Long before she arose, the question had been settled as to her future; and the happiness of finding a new father and mother seemed to console her, in a great degree, for the loss of her own.

"Poor child!" said kind Mrs Greenwood, "there are many who would make her deformity an objection to adopting her. People who go to orphan asylums, I have noticed, always select the most beautiful children. Let us, dear Horace, show the world that such motives do not influence us."

"You are right, little woman. The child's infirmities will but make her dearer to us. She has evidently been tenderly

trained by her own parents, and we will try to fill their places to their orphan."

"Who saved me?" suddenly asked little Meeta, as they sat around the breakfast-table. "I remember nothing after I saw my father and mother washed from the deck." And she wept bitterly at the terrible remembrance.

"Sidney Harrod," answered Captain Horace. "The poor boy and yourself were both insensible when you were brought to us."

"O, was Sidney alive? And did he save me, and how?"

She sat, during the relation, with clasped hands and a face crimsoning with gratitude and love.

"He was my friend all the voyage. I might have known he would be the one to save me. But the other poor fellows—were any of them lost?"

"Not a man!" answered the captain. "Wonderfully indeed did God preserve the lives of so many in such extreme peril. Not a soul perished after the ship went to pieces. All who died were previously washed from the deck."

"And where is Sidney now?"

"With his family at home. I have sent to inquire for him this morning, and he says he will see his little friend before night."

"I am so glad!"

And glad indeed she was, if one might judge from her varying color when, at sunset, the young sailor came in—pale, indeed, and worn, and supported by his father, who wore a look of unutterable thankfulness—but with a happy face at once more seeing the child who had been so dear to him through the voyage, and whose affliction he had so sincerely pitied.

"But I have a new father and mother," she said, smiling through her tears. "And we shall live so near, too. O, I am so glad!"

But she cried herself sick when Sidney went on his next voyage; and the captain's telescope was seldom without a blue eye peering through it, to watch for his coming home.

"I do fear for Meeta," said Mrs. Greenwood to her husband. "She loves that boy with all her heart, and, manlike, he will see some fairer girl, and make our poor child miserable."

"Nonsense, wife! Sid Harrod is not the youth I take him for, if he does not love

Meeta better, even, than she loves him. Why, the very fact of his saving her life will bind him to her forever. Why did I love you? Not for your beauty, you dear old homely wife—but because you fell into my arms from a tree, when the fall would otherwise have been your death. From that moment I saw no beauty in another that could have wiled my heart from you. And now that you have adopted this little waif, you are still dearer, if possible, than ever."

"Hush, Horace! you are laughing at me. I have often been tempted to regret that I was not half handsome enough for you—and see! I am growing gray, too!" And she held up a glossy black curl with silver threads intermingled.

"Every silver hair is worth more to me than a hundred other women! There, can I say anything more gallant than that to my dear old lady-love?"

"No, you old goose!" she laughingly rejoined, and resumed her sewing—not without a tear in her eye, as she worked upon a little new dress for Meeta.

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It is now seven years since the little girl has been the best of daughters to the kind old couple. To-morrow is her eighteenth birthday, and Meeta was to be married to the young captain of the "Grace Darling," Sidney Harrod. The youth has prospered most wonderfully. For seven years he has had fortunate voyages, and has been respected and beloved by every one connected with him. Captain Horace promised him long ago that he should marry Meeta whenever the "captain" should be prefixed to his name; and Sidney has just returned from his first voyage in that capacity.

Meeta will never leave her adopted parents; nor will Sidney desire it. Beach Cottage is their home still, and John Harrod, grown gray with years, still lives near them, his own home made bright and happy by the filial generosity of his children. Through their kindness he and his wife live luxuriously, and both love Meeta as dearly as they do their own. They call her the "Gift of the Sea," and never was a gift more highly prized.

To-night they are arranging a table with precious gifts for her, that she will not know of until she walks into the room to-morrow in her bridal dress. Then, if not so lovely as some brides, she will be as truly beloved as any that ever wore the wedding garment; and Sidney Harrod will be as proud of her as ever bridegroom could be of the "tallest, straightest and handsomest."

Reader, if you ever visit Southport, ask for "Captain Horace." Proud and glad will he be to show you his dear old wife, his daughter and her sailor husband, his pretty "Beach Cottage" telescope, and all his garden and its abundant vines and fruit trees; nor will he fail to call in his friend John Harrod, when together they will relate how the "Storm Child" was brought to them on that terrible night, when the king of the tempest seemed waiting to destroy the fragile life.

They will tell you the story in more thrilling and lifelike language than my poor pen can write it; and, although if you stay long enough, they will tell you whole volumes of tales of the sea, you will see that none are dwelt upon with such deep and tender pathos as that of the Storm Child.

## THE STORY OF A SOFA-CUSHION.

BY ANNA MASON.

## PART I.

"Poor management, certainly," growled tart Mrs. Wilson.

"O, an oversight, no doubt!" sighed Mrs. Dunham, in reply.

"Humph!" sneered Mrs. Wilson, in disgust, at Mrs. Dunham's mild way of putting things.

"To be sure, everything else of as great value was sold at lottery," continued Mrs. Dunham, "and no one likes to pay so much as fifty dollars, out and out, for a thing of this sort."

Then seeing Mrs. Wilson's sour face falling into additional acidity, she added, deprecatingly:

"Although it is very beautiful, and well worth every cent of the money, you know—Dear! dear! it was a great oversight!"

"It was more than an oversight—it was mismanagement," asserted the irascible Mrs. Wilson.

Her black eyes snapped with temper, and her scarlet worsted broke off viciously as she drew it through with a jerk.

"Then, too, the idea of having it on Miss Webster's stand—a girl as dull as ditch-water and as plain as a hedge-fence!—why, hardly any one stopped to buy of her at all!"

"Well, ladies," said Mrs. Barkus, opening, at last, her tightly compressed lips, "as Presidentess of the late Committee of Arrangements, these remarks reflect unpleasantly on me. I believe we all did our best, and that this one oversight may be remedied. Even now, we might effect the sale."

Mrs. Barkus was slow and pompous, and Mrs. Wilson's sharp ways stirred her sluggish blood most unpleasantly.

"What do you mean?" demanded the virago. "Are you ready to buy it yourself and add the money to the society funds?"

"Scarcely, ma'am," replied Mrs. Barkus, putting up her gold eyeglass and fixing Mrs. Wilson with a stony glare.

"I've no fifty dollars to throw away on such a thing, although the work is yours; as I was about to remark, I believe it can be sold at lottery, even now."

"Nonsense!" fairly screamed Mrs. Wilson. "People here have been bored to death with lotteries already; another would prove the straw too many."

Mrs. Wilson was thus violently opposed to the new plan because she had a vague notion that her work, having remained unsold, should by good rights have returned to her.

Having cast her bread upon the waters, she would have liked its returning to her at once, rather than awaiting the tedious and uncertain result of many days.

Mrs. Barkus read the thought with her usual astuteness, and having taken plenty of time to frame a reply, she suggested, sarcastically:

"Perhaps you would like to take it back, Mrs. Wilson? No doubt we would all of us—Mrs. Dunham here and I myself included—like to get back the elegant articles made for the fair, after having once received the credit of the gifts; otherwise I cannot account for your being so opposed to a raffle."

Mrs. Wilson flushed quietly, and murmured, mildly for her:

"You're very much mistaken; nothing would please me more than to see it sold for the benefit of the fair. You may get up the lottery if you please, only I am certain no one would buy the tickets; the gentlemen would flee from you as if you was the plagues of Egypt if you plan another assault upon their pocket-books."

"Perhaps they would," assented Mrs. Barkus, with a grim smile. "I shouldn't attempt selling the tickets myself, nor should I dream of asking you to do so. But there is Miss Langlois, who is an acknowledged beauty—"

"That creature!—bold as brass, insolent and under-bred! I've often heard you condemn her in like terms yourself!"

"Very true, but she is suited to our purpose. She will succeed where your *highly-bred* daughter would fail. You see she is a great favorite with the gentlemen."

"Who know about as much as so many stone walls!"

Mrs. Barkus shrugged her shoulders.

"There, I will not pretend to contradict you," she replied, for she was somewhat noted for the bitterness of her feelings toward the sterner sex.

"Still, as I was about to say—if you will kindly give me the opportunity—Miss Langlois will certainly succeed if she once undertakes the sale of the tickets. You see she knows *every one*, and it is easier for people to refuse to buy of a stranger than of an acquaintance."

"And she is very good-natured," suggested Mrs. Dunham, timidly.

This latter lady was not quite so unamiable as her coadjutors; but she was so snubbed and put down when her better nature asserted itself that she was usually chary of charitable speech.

"Humph! she's forward enough, if that is what you mean," sneered Mrs. Wilson.

It was not what Mrs. Dunham meant, but she did not venture to say so.

"Miss Langlois is not at all what modest, prettily-behaved girls were expected to be when we were young," supplemented Mrs. Barkus.

"However, she will serve our purpose, and there is no reason to suppose she will refuse to undertake anything that will render her sufficiently conspicuous."

The object in dispute was a beautifully-embroidered sofa-cushion, left over from the sales of the fair which had been gotten up at the principal hotel of a pretty watering-place, during the height of the season, in the name of Saint Charity.

The young lady so unpleasantly discussed was the belle of the house and the leading spirit in all undertakings.

When she had first arrived, chaperoned by an invalid aunt, who never dreamed of interfering with her movements, she had organized a series of "G. mans," then had thrown herself, heart and soul, into private theatricals, where she had improvised the costumes, trained the heavy beaux and belles into tolerable actors and actresses (a work requiring infinite patience), and herself taken the leading parts with a gusto that justified the self-assertion.

When the fair had been proposed it was Miss Langlois who had helped it forward most enthusiastically, making pretty trifles, spending money freely, and coaxing the gruff proprietor into permitting them the use of the ballroom for their sales.

She had presided successfully at a stand where, arrayed coquetishly, she had sold with an energy and shrewdness worthy of a Jewish tradeswoman.

It is not remarkable, then, that when waylaid by Mrs. Barkus she yielded a ready assent to her request that she would undertake to sell tickets for the new lottery.

"Certainly I will," she replied, in her most airy manner. "I will number twenty-five tickets, and will sell them at two dollars each. Every one shall be disposed of before I go to bed to-night; the gentlemen shall buy for coaxing or threats!"

She laughed the airy laugh that always irritated Mrs. Wilson, and swept by the angry lady, her rainbow-hued sash flying back into her very face like a saucy defiance.

The trio of worthy dames, thus willing to avail themselves of Miss Langlois's services, shook their heads in solemn disapproval as she vanished.

"We've given her another opportunity for display, therefore she is quite obliged to us!" observed the Tartar.

"Shockingly vain," sighed mild Mrs. Dunham; "but no real harm in her, my dears!"

"I'm certain *she paints*," said Mrs. Barkus, severely. "It's a great shame, and I do not pretend to deny that I dislike to see young girls fast!"

"Alas for the rarity  
Of Christian charity  
Under the sun,"

sang Miss Langlois in her sweet soprano, as she suddenly passed, eyeing the ladies with merry malice until they quailed beneath her glances, feeling an uncomfortable consciousness of having been caught in the very act of talking about her.

Miss Langlois did not lack penetration, and was quite aware she was disliked; but the knowledge did not prey upon her mind. It might have been otherwise had she dreamed of the depth of hate that burned like a baleful fire in the heart of one of the trio. Mrs. Wilson hated her for various reasons.

First of all, their natures were antagonistic; next, she was aware that Miss Langlois was laughing at and ridiculing her in a wellbred way; and lastly, the gay beauty had completely thrown into the shade her pretty but very commonplace daughter. To make it worse, Mrs. Wilson had strained

every nerve to give her daughter this season of fashionable society, and had determined she would return to town with Millie engaged.

Mrs. Barkus was too full of her own importance to conceive of such a thing as Miss Langlois, or any one else, having the audacity to ridicule her; she disliked the girl simply because she was quick and gay, and, so to speak, rasped on her nerves.

Browbeaten Mrs. Dunham did not, at heart, dislike her at all, and had no objection to her distinguishing and enjoying herself to any reasonable degree.

When evening came Miss Langlois appeared in the parlors, wearing a robe of white, festooned with natural flowers, the gift of some anonymous admirer. She looked more beautiful and animated than ever. In one hand she carried a small gilded card-basket, in which were the tickets.

On the piano, conspicuously placed, was the sofa cushion. There was considerable laughter and fun as Miss Langlois flitted about the rooms, from one gentleman to another, disposing of a ticket or two every time she made the attempt, although, it must be confessed, that one or two beat an ignominious retreat, and escaped to the piazza as she approached.

At last the tickets were all gone but one, when Miss Langlois glanced about the rooms to find that she had exhausted her acquaintances. Nothing daunted, she approached a middle-aged, grave-looking gentleman, who was standing near the door.

"I beg your pardon for addressing you, since I have not the honor of your acquaintance; but I cannot bear defeat—I promised those ladies yonder," slightly pointing them out, "that I would sell every ticket, and I will. You were not here during our fair, sir; it was for an excellent cause—"

Then blushing furiously as she perceived a smile of quiet amusement flit across his face, she bluntly concluded:

"In short, sir, the ticket is two dollars, and yonder is the prize."

The gentleman bowed gravely as he received his ticket and paid for it.

Mrs. Barkus announced the fortunate number to be seven.

The stranger glanced at his, gave a little start of surprise, and approaching Miss Langlois said, smilingly:

"I hold it, I believe."

She swept him a courtesy, slightly in-

spected the ticket as she received it from his hand, and with a neat little speech presented the prize.

"Was it made by these fair hands?" questioned the gentleman, in an undertone.

"By no means," replied the young lady, with a laughing and significant glance towards Mrs. Wilson.

"In that case it has no value for me," replied the gentleman, and proceeded to startle Miss Langlois by making a neat little speech in his turn, wherein he presented the cushion to her whose zeal had commanded universal applause, not in his own name, but in the name, and, he was sure, with the approbation of all who had taken part in the fair he had been so unfortunate as to miss!

There was a round of good-natured applause and laughing assent. With pretty confusion and surprise Miss Langlois accepted the gift, and stammered out a few words of thanks in a manner quite devoid of her usual self-possession.

People in general were well pleased; but Mrs. Barkus remarked that if the gentleman had had a sense of what was customary, he would have presented the cushion to the late presidentess of the fair; whereupon Mrs. Wilson sniffed so, she asserted that the fitting person to have received the gift would have been the lady whose work it was.

Later in the evening, when the troubled waters of social intercourse had smoothed, Mrs. Wilson joined her friends in great excitement.

"I've just been talking to pa," cried she, breathlessly (she referred to her husband). "Pa says the stranger is General Houghton, of the Regular Army. He's awful rich, well connected, and a bachelordor! Where's Millie?" And she bustled across the room with much the grace of a self-important barnyard hen.

"How disgusting are that poor, ignorant, foolish woman's undisguised efforts to catch a husband for that thick-headed daughter of hers!" remarked Mrs. Barkus, with unusual energy, as she raised her gold-rimmed glasses to her severe eyes, and gazed after Mrs. Wilson with the same expression of scientific curiosity with which a naturalist might look on a new and unique specimen.

Meanwhile, Mrs. Wilson approached the general.

"You're a stranger here, I believe, sir?" she began, nothing abashed by his air of awful dignity.

"Yes, madam."

"This is a very pleasant hotel, sir. Ahem! I claim an elderly lady's privilege of making you feel to home. We're awful sociable here."

"Indeed!"

Mrs. Wilson found the gentleman's monosyllabic mode of conversation trying, and proceeded to search for Millie. She found that brilliant young lady gently snoring in a large armchair in a deserted music-room.

"Git up, Millie, you stupid thing!" shaking her. "I'm going to introduce you to Miss Langlois's stranger. He's a general, and awful rich. You must do your best to interest him in you."

"He's horrid old and plain, ma!"

"'Old and plain!' no he aint. I tell you, Millie Wilson, if you have got the pretty features and skin I had when I was a girl, you aint none too bright, and can't pick and choose. General Houghton is rich, and I command you to do your best to catch him. The season is half gone, and if you go back to the city not engaged, your day is over. Your pa is going to fail; we'll have to take a smaller house and no servants. You'll have to sweep, dust, and the Lord only knows what all!"

Mrs. Wilson dragged reluctant pouting Millie up to General Houghton, and officiously introduced them, while he smiled shrewdly at the transparent manoeuvre.

Feeling quite complacent, Mrs. Wilson subsided into a chair near Miss Langlois, who did not observe her.

In her usually animated manner, the "obnoxious girl" was entertaining a young collegian with an anecdote of the regatta. Then the conversation turned on Millie. The young gentleman remarked that she was pretty, but too stupid for anything; quite bored a fellow to death.

"She was so quiet I just worked an hour to draw her out, you know."

"And then you were willing to work equally hard to shut her up again," laughed Miss Langlois.

"Just so—like an opera-glass out of order, you know—ha! ha!"

"Once launched on the sea of the commonplace, one finds her simply awful," continued Miss Langlois, a little unkindly.

Mrs. Wilson hated Miss Langlois then,

but not so intensely as she hated her a little later, when, returning, she found her in animated conversation with General Houghton, while Millie stood off forlorn and unsought, idly toying with her fan.

Bristling with indignation, Mrs. Wilson stepped up to Miss Langlois as about to address her. The general bowed and withdrew.

"You're a nice young lady, Miss Langlois, to pick up acquaintance with strangers, and no introductions; nice proper people you'll pick up in such a way! You will come to some dreadful end!"

"Is that *your* affair, madam? Your interest in me is *too* kind. As for introductions, Mrs. Wilson, I am not so fortunate as your daughter; my aunt is ill and unable to pick acquaintance with a stranger to introduce him to me, as you did for your daughter."

"And how do you know I was not acquainted with General Houghton before, pray?"

"I heard him say he had never met you before, madam, and perhaps he added in his heart, as I do in mine, that he could survive it very well never to meet you again. Now if you are sufficiently answered, madam, I will no longer bandy words with you—it is beneath me."

"Impudence!" gasped Mrs. Wilson, as Miss Langlois swept by her with the air of an empress.

Against fate, kindred tastes, affinities, mutual attraction, and so on, Mrs. Wilson proved powerless, watching in helpless chagrin while acquaintance deepened into intimacy, and General Houghton became Miss Langlois's inseparable companion in walks and drives. He accompanied her in stately if somewhat awkward fashion through Quadrilles and Lancers, or meekly held her cloak while she waltzed, claiming her after the dance. In what a tender protecting fashion he wrapped her cloak about her as they sauntered to the cool piazza!

"It was enough to make a body sick!"

Once the eavesdropping little woman with pussycat tread heard Miss Langlois say:

"Don't coax me to waltz. I'd rather not. It is not you who are selfishly keeping me from it, but I who am a thousand times happier with you."

"What a fool she makes of him!"

Millie's chances were growing beautifully less.

Meeting Miss Langlois, the spiteful woman ventured to banter her.

"The last man one would expect you to shine to, Miss Langlois. Old and plain is what my daughter calls him, and he aint no richer than young good-looking fellows you could get if you played your cards right! But you're a sad flirt!"

"General Houghton is a man of a grandeur and nobility of character which the ignorant person who calls him old and plain could not even faintly comprehend."

"O, indeed!"

Millie's chances were all over, but Mrs. Wilson was thirsting for revenge.

## PART II.

THE evening was serene and beautiful. General Houghton and Miss Langlois had returned from rowing, and lingered on the moonlighted deserted piazza.

"Let me finish what I was saying, darling," he murmured. "I have practised no intentional deceit in representing myself to the world at large as a bachelor—so few had ever known my true history; my position was so peculiar; my punishment for a youthful rashness had fallen so heavily upon me. Until I met you, Cecile, I had not dreamed I should ever love."

"I thank you beyond words for your noble confidence in me," replied her low clear voice, that, however softly she spoke, was as distinct in utterance and as penetrating as a bell.

"I will share your future life if you will permit me. I cannot allow any one's advice or wishes to change me, for *I love you*,"—the words uttered with infinite sweetness and gravity.

"If I understand you, this is your position: Years ago, at the breaking up of a ball given in honor of the immediate departure of your regiment, you were married, half in a spirit of frolic, to a young girl for whom you were known to have a fancy. You parted from her with promises of mutual fidelity. Through your lawyer you provided for her liberal support. You corresponded, her letters growing colder, less frequent and briefer, until they ceased. Full of anxiety, after years of arduous service, you returned and sought for her. The girl you regarded as your wife had proved fickle and false—you found she had married another! You might have pursued her,

but did not. The law granted you divorce, and with a saddened heart you received back your liberty.

"To-night you have asked me if this should ruin your whole life, and I say—No! I care not what the world says—God and the law have made you free. For a false and foolish pride I will not wreck your life nor my own; General Houghton, I shall be proud and happy to become your wife."

Notwithstanding her low tones, she had spoken with intense excitement, and her gestures had been rapid and dramatic. As her voice died away her head sank, and she offered no resistance as the general drew her to his arms.

"Heaven bless you, Cecile! You have acted with a noble independence and a generous confidence scarcely possible to one girl in a thousand among your fashionable compeers. I have fought my love, for it seemed selfish for a man of my years, weary and world-worn, to seek to win to himself your fresh young life. I fought my love, and would have died with it unspoken, had I not seen the tears in your eyes as you spoke of leaving me to-morrow. If I had not read in those sweet eyes love that broke down for me all barriers, trampled on all my scruples—"

"Then blessed be the tears of which I was ashamed! I leave to-morrow, and O, with what an unsatisfied heart, had you not told me that you loved me! Now—all is changed." And her smile was radiant. "We soon shall meet again in my own home, and my parents, brothers and friends will welcome and receive you. With such a hope I can bear the pain of parting bravely."

There was a kiss, a low "good-night," and Miss Langlois sped lightly to her aunt's room. For a moment she thought that she would tell her all, then changed her mind, as she reflected:

"No, auntie can wait. It wouldn't be fair to mother to tell any one else first."

In the morning, smiling with all the happy confidence of love, General Edward Houghton, with a crowd of Miss Langlois's adorers, saw her and her aunt off in the early stage. Entering the house, he was confronted by his aversion, Mrs. Wilson.

"So that heartless flirt is off!" commenced the lady.

The general's face darkened, and he drew himself up to his full military height.



"Madam, I permit no one to speak disrespectfully of my future wife."

"That painted doll your future wife!—ha!—ha! Why, the girl aint but eighteen, and I doubt if you'll ever see forty again! But that is neither here nor there. Miss Langlois was just making a fool of you. She made a bet with my daughter Millie, that she would get you to propose to her. Millie has often threatened to tell you, for she felt sorry for you."

"You lie—that is, you are mistaken, madam," cried the general, pale as death, and trembling violently. "No more of this! Stand out of my way!"

"I'm only telling you the truth! Didn't Cecile Langlois come into my room last night to tell Millie all about it, and didn't they laugh and giggle half the night? Did Miss Langlois's aunt congratulate you this morning? Not much; Miss Langlois is too cunning to tell her aunt her tricks. Ask my daughter if I aint telling you the truth. Write to Miss Langlois, only she wont answer you. Didn't she tell Millie you couldn't prove the trash she had talked to you? (she's an elegant actress, she can make her eyes fill with tears, she can act out anything); but she said she'd never be fool enough to put it down in black and white."

"I do not believe one word you say—I shall inquire the truth of your remarks of Miss Langlois herself and of no one else—I shall not write; but see her face to face."

"To get laughed at for your pains, or more like to have her send you word she wasn't to home. Fie! fie! not to go off without a fuss when a lady is through with you!"

"Now I'll give you my proofs. Miss Langlois told my daughter that so far from being a bachelior as you had pretended, you was a married man, and had a bad miserable wife living somewhere now."

"How would I know your history if she hadn't told Millie, for she said you'd never told no one else but her?"

"Then Miss Langlois said you were fool enough to think she meant to marry you."

"Did she, then, so betray me! Is she, still so young, so base?" groaned the general, and strong man that he was he covered his face and burst into tears in the presence of the vulgar, bad-hearted woman, whom he utterly detested.

Mrs. Wilson's work was done; she stole

away, a fiendish smile lighting her cruel little black eyes.

"No going after her now, or I don't know you, general."

And she was right, for without a word of explanation to Miss Langlois, he sailed on the following week for Europe.

The girl he had idolized and trusted had proved false. As he had loved so now he hated her in the bitter revulsion of feeling. Nothing was left him; no revenge to which he could stoop, no reparation which she could make! She could be nothing to him now.

There remained only to put between them miles of separation. Once more he would face his bitter fate, oppressed by a dreadful sense of despair, and having lost the last hold on his faith in the love, goodness or truth of woman.

In the meanwhile Miss Langlois had confided, first to her mother, then to her aunt, her engagement to General Houghton. The latter had proved a warm champion, and so held up to admiration the general's fine qualities, that prejudice and opposition melted away beneath her eloquence.

Time passed, and poor Cecile looked in vain for tidings of her recreant lover. She was tormented with anxiety, dreading that he might be ill or even dead—they had so few friends in common.

Then she heard news of him—he had sailed for Europe! Agonizing doubt began to rankle in the heart of the proud merry girl. Doubt grew into certainty, and certainty into bitterness. He had amused himself for a while—she was a fool to have so loved and trusted him. She would not be a laughing-stock as well. She would hide her hurt.

By common consent her parents asked her no questions, nor even mentioned General Houghton's name in her hearing. They and her aunt alone suspected the agony of despair that was sapping at her very life.

Throughout the long gay season she wore the willow so debonairly, that it might readily have been mistaken for the *panache* of a conqueror. I am not certain that she did not resort to the "paint" of which Mrs. Barkus had unjustly and prematurely accused her; for she would have gone great lengths, rather than that the world should have suspected that she had embarked all her hope and love in one weak craft and

met with shipwreck. Even Mrs. Wilson, meeting her, and hoping to gloat over her misery, was deceived and disappointed.

"Ah! ha! my lady!" thought she; "I've cheated you out of a husband for all you look so careless and gay. Much you must have cared for the poor wretch, though, you heartless jade!"

But it could not last so forever. The long winter season over, Cecile was rapidly failing in health and spirits, and her friends were anxiously talking of a change of scene and air.

About this time General Houghton returned from Europe, a little more worn and gray. He was thinking of Cecile with a strange mixture of hatred and a sense of loss, contempt and longing, when suddenly he encountered Percy Dunham from Boston.

"Welcome back, and how is your wife?" cried Percy, gayly.

"I have no wife," rejoined the general, bitterly.

"I beg your pardon. I was thinking of some gossip of last season. You remember my mother was at the Grove House! I heard of you as devoted to a beautiful girl, and I had so lost sight of you as to be unable to judge of the results. Mother concluded it had ended in matrimony, although at first she was afraid that a conversation that had been overheard had been wrongfully made use of. Mother was a fool to let those ridiculous women browbeat her—they just twisted her around their thumbs!"

"Hold on, Percy!" cried the general, excitedly, a new light dawning on his mind.

"Here we are at the Hoffman House; just come to my room with me—I wish to question you further."

Percy Dunham was willing to tell all that he knew, and in five minutes' conversation General Houghton had learned the facts in the case.

"Mrs. Wilson had come into mother's room, and they were sitting in a window where they overheard every word of a private conversation between yourself and Miss Langlois.

"Mother was taken by surprise, and could not move without betraying their position as listeners. Mrs. Wilson held her like a vice and put her finger to her lips. The meanness of having listened at all worried mother, and then she was afraid that what had been overheard might be put to some bad use by Mrs. Wilson. Mother got

that Tartar to promise she would not repeat it, and—"

"Percy, it was used most treacherously. I will explain to you at some future time. Had I met you and heard this before I sailed for Europe, I should have had a sweet little wife for a companion in place of bitter thoughts. It is seven o'clock!—excuse me, Percy, for this evening, I have a call to make. And now I insist that you shall consider yourself my guest during your stay in New York, and you must remain long enough for my wedding."

"The general is an amiable lunatic," concluded Percy, as his friend rushed off in excited haste.

"At all events he's the Prince of Good Fellows," added he after the, to him, unusual exertion of thinking consecutively for five minutes on one subject.

The general hailed a cab and ordered the driver to take him to No.—Madison Avenue as quickly as possible.

During that brief drive a thousand anxious thoughts passed through his mind. What might not have happened during his absence? Cecile might have died or married! But when he inquired for her, the servant at once admitted him to an elegant little reception room.

For one moment Cecile lost self-possession when the card was handed her.

"You may go," she said, to the servant.

Then her face became as blanched as marble, and she gazed at her mother piteously.

"Read the name, mother," she faltered, and sank half-fainting at her feet.

"That villain!" cried the gentle lady, fairly roused. "How dare he show his face here? He shall not gaze upon his work, nor judge of the wreck he has made! Do you think, child, that I have not guessed your sufferings, that I do not know how altered you are? I will receive this man."

"No, mother," said Cecile, firmly but gently, rising to her feet pale and calm. "It is my right. I will see him once more in this world face to face, then I shall become more resigned and happier."

Mrs. Langlois hid her face in her hands as her unhappy daughter left her.

No one would have guessed Cecile's agitation could they have seen the cool bright-looking little lady, who received General Houghton.

"We meet again!" she said, extending

her hand so carelessly, that our hero doubted, for a moment, that she had ever loved him.

"Your trip to Europe was very unexpected, was it not?"

"Very."

"And did you enjoy it? you are looking remarkably well."

O Cecile, you little hypocrite! you were wondering that very moment what those gray hairs and those added weary lines about the mouth and eyes could mean.

"No, Miss Langlois, I found no enjoyment in my trip."

"Troubled with an uneasy conscience?" queried Cecile; but in such a light laughing tone.

She glanced up into his face, but found his eyes riveted on the elegant sofa-cushion which had served as an introduction between them at the beginning of their acquaintance.

Her face flushed scarlet. "O that cushion!" she cried, hurriedly. "Mamma was shocked that I should have accepted it from you. I must give it back—she would have insisted on my sending it only I did not know your address."

"How can you talk of such trifles after a year of separation, Cecile? Did you never love me that you are thus cruel?"

"How dare you ask?" she cried, dropping her light tone and speaking with passionate vehemence.

"How dare I ask?"—because I love you."

"And you dare say that to me, to me whom you humbled to the very dust! to me whom you deserted and left to every bitter doubt of the goodness of man, or the justice of God! Did we meet as men and equals meet, you would never have dared practise imposition and insult. But beware how you presume further on my being a woman, and a proud one! I wonder at your audacity and at your dastardly cowardice."

General Houghton gazed at her as if overwhelmed by her scornful reproaches.

"As Heaven is my witness, Cecile," he said solemnly, "I have been a sufferer as well as you. We have both been victims of a wicked woman's arts. Listen to my explanation, and then come back to my arms again, if you can forgive me wherein I have been wrong. Or listen and send me forth again to unutterable anguish and suffering if you deem I deserve it."

Cecile listened with breathless attention,

while he told her what the reader already knows of Mrs. Wilson's course of action. Before he had concluded, Cecile's hand had stolen into his, and she was sobbing on his shoulder.

"It is dreadful to think I could have inspired such hatred," she murmured sadly. "What had she to gain that she should have risked so much, and gone such lengths! Yes, I forgive you, General Houghton; but I never would have believed a word against you, had the whole world cried out; but would have gone to you for explanation of what seemed so mysterious, and have given you opportunity to defend yourself."

"I believe you, Cecile; you would have had more faith than I, more justice, and more patience, even had you feared the worst. I was mad! I felt mocked, crushed, betrayed! I have been wrong, darling, but I have suffered. If my love—if my life—if my unbounded confidence can atone—" his voice faltered, he felt the soft pressure of her hand against his face, their lips met.

\* \* \* \* \*

Well, after that there was a wedding. It was a very quiet affair, for Cecile would have it so; but two weeks later there was a grand reception when General Houghton and his bride returned from their wedding tour.

Cecile's parents and friends were more than satisfied, especially, when they learned that the woman who for a time had unworthily borne General Houghton's name, was no longer living.

The sofa-cushion was returned to Mrs. Wilson, as the two could not endure the sight of a piece of her handiwork; to it were pinned cards announcing their marriage. Needless to say, no reception cards were with them. And it was well, for had Mrs. Wilson attempted a thin silk for herself and a cheap tarlatan for Millie where into make themselves presentable in upper circles, I fear much the poor household would have suffered for many a weary week to make up the expense.

"Come here, Millie!" cried Mrs. Wilson, when she had with her own hands opened the door, and received the parcel from an errand boy.

Millie appeared, her head tied in a towel, dustcloth and brushes in hand.

"Now I suppose they call this sarcasm," said Mrs. Wilson, pointing to the sofa-cushion. "For my part, I'm mighty glad to get it back."

"So am I, ma. Our parlors look shabby enough, and there isn't half enough in them. The cushion looks handsome, don't it? and I don't care if Miss Langlois has got that old-looking general."

Mrs. Wilson groaned. Little did Millie know of her iniquitous proceedings. The sofa-cushion had been a part of her investment to get into genteel society for one summer, the object being to get Millie married off. The speculation had failed. Mr. Wilson had invested in speculations of another sort and no more creditable; they, too, had failed. Here they were, then, a pair of disappointed schemers, of broken down speculators, not a pin's choice between them.

As for Millie, having failed in the matrimonial market, she now occupied the position of drudge and menial in her shabby home.

It seemed to be Mrs. Wilson's fate for the next two or three months to encounter the happy laughing face of Mrs. General

Houghton. Riding up in a horsecar, wearied and laden with bundles, she beheld her in her carriage, surrounded by friends, driving up to the Park.

Going with Millie unattended to the theatre to witness a grand play, they beheld the general and his wife in their box, surrounded by several people of the greatest and most honorable distinction.

The sight of the happy Cecile became an eyesore. The sofa-cushion by its associations grew intolerable.

"Millie," cried Mrs. Wilson, sharply one day. "There was more *sarcasm* than I thought at first, in sending me this thing. Up garret it will have to go till you get a home of your own, if you ever do. There's Smith—he's only a grocer, but he's the only one ever wanted to marry you that I've heard of—you'll have to take him or be an old maid!"

And up garret the sofa-cushion was sent, to wait on Millie's doubtful chances for resurrection.

## THE STORY OF BOURMONT.

BY JAMES FRANKLIN FITTS.

How it came about that I married one of those men, and not the other, makes a very strange story, and one that I have told pretty often. And it isn't a story about courting and marrying only; if it were, I suppose I should not have the patience to tell it over so often. White hairs, spectacles and wrinkles take much of the romance out of people, I find; though, really, I'm not above reading a cleverly told love story yet, if I was eighty-one last Friday. But my story deals with some other things than these, as you shall see. I have told it to your fathers and mothers before you, and their friends and schoolfellows; and here is another generation of young folks, almost old enough to begin to think about love and marriage, clamoring around my chair on this blessed Thanksgiving night for this "same old story." Well, well; get your chairs up here into a circle, keep as quiet as you can, and I'll go over it once more, at least.

My maiden name was Betsey Barker. When I was christened, eighty-one years ago almost, people hadn't got into the fashion of giving dolls' names to girls; they liked the good old honest kind, and Betsey was thought to be handy and honest. My father was Colonel Jason Barker, a veteran of the glorious Revolution, which had only closed a matter of a dozen years before; and he had come out of the war covered with laurels. He commanded his regiment in three campaigns, and might have been a general before the end of the war; but he actually preferred his regiment, and refused the promotion. He could show the scars of two severe wounds that he got at Germantown; and he often did show a letter in Washington's own writing, thanking him for his fidelity and bravery. I speak of all this that you may know something of what kind of man he would be likely to be. He was a bluff hearty person, with a loud laugh and a strong grip of the hand; not well educated, but with a good hard common sense that stood well in the place of the culture that he had missed. He was a warm friend and a bitter enemy; he always intended to do what was right and just;

but, as often happens to men of this kind, he was sometimes deceived and flattered into favoring unworthy persons. But I must not get ahead of my story.

My mother died shortly after I was born, leaving me an only child. She was the daughter of a comrade of my father, and he had known her from her childhood. He felt her loss keenly; in fact, it quite unsettled him. Just about this time a relative died, leaving him a fortune. This determined my father to carry out a long-cherished plan; to go to the Western frontier and settle where he could hunt and fish, and enjoy what he was fond of calling the "large life" of the woods. So he came, when I was nine years old, and brought quite a company of servants and attendants with him. With almost incredible toil and difficulty he got this house built; a very good mansion, even in these days of show and glitter; but then it was thought a miracle. He called it Bourmont, after an old friend in the French wing of the army; and in those early days he used to entertain many of his former comrades who came to visit him out in the wilderness. It was, in fact, wild enough about here then, though fifty miles east of the Ohio. When we first came there was not another house in sight, and it required difficult and painful labor to get our supplies through from the settlements. It was a strange kind of life, and it seemed hardly natural that I should like it; but I did. We had books in plenty, and musical instruments; I was a bright child, eager to learn, and had much instruction from our visitors. Father was often absent during the day, hunting or fishing; but the evenings he generally gave to me, and the stories, the songs, and the instruction of those delightful nights are pleasant now to think of.

When I was fifteen I was sent to Philadelphia to school. I remained there three years, and then returned to Bourmont. The country had been somewhat cleared up in my absence, and settlers had located near us in considerable numbers; but the neighborhood was still a wild one, with plenty of game and some fear of trouble

with the Indians. There was a remnant of a once powerful tribe in this vicinity, which had sided with the British during the Revolution. They had looked with angry eyes upon the gradual settlement of their country by the whites, and parts of the tribe had moved a little distance west in consequence of it. There had as yet been no real outbreak; but some things had occurred that were significant of bad blood, and trouble to come.

Hardly a month before the time I am now about to speak of, a teamster who brought us supplies from the nearest village was found in his wagon by the roadside, from which his horses had been taken. An arrow was driven quite through his body, and his scalp was gone. Cattle were stolen from barns and clearings; and in one instance a barn was fired and consumed. Of course there could be no doubt of the cause of all this; but the depredators had worked with the well-known cunning of their race, and hardly an Indian had been seen in the vicinity since my return. But I cannot say that any great uneasiness was caused by these things. My father supposed that the murder of the teamster was due to some wrong he had done to some of these never-forgiving people; and the other outrages he put down to the account of Indian devilishness.

"The creatures always would steal," he said, "and retaliate upon any one they thought had particularly wronged them. But as for any uprising, or anything that looks in the least like surprise or massacre—that's all nonsense. Just convince me that there is anything in it, and I'll raise a small regiment among these settlers, arm them myself, and cut up the tribe, root and branch. But it's all moonshine."

Colonel Barker was high authority among all the settlers, and there was very little dissent from his opinion. True, there were one or two hotheads who had fought with him in the Revolution, who were fierce for such a sharp and thorough reprisal as would teach the Indians better for the future; but my father's counsels prevailed. There was just at this time an occurrence which showed how the hatred of the settlers had been inflamed against the Indians; and as it was an incident that had an important bearing on the sequel of the story, I must relate it.

Before these late alarms, I had been in

the habit of going alone into the woods just beyond the clearing that surrounded Bourmont, to botanize, or, strange as it may seem, to hunt. I had practised with both rifle and shot-gun; and not only did I kill squirrels and partridges with the light arms that my father had given me, but on one occasion I had killed a buck on the run at a hundred yards. These excursions had been discontinued for a time in consequence of these alarms; but as time passed and nothing more of the kind happened, I grew weary of my confinement to the house, and determined to take what risk there might be in a short tramp through the forest. With my little pocket-compass and my rifle, I started, and after killing two wild turkeys, I sent the servant who had followed me home with them, and continued my walk alone. Suddenly I heard a noise like a moan. I stopped and listened, and distinctly heard the sound repeated two or three times, from some place not far off. All my old fears were instantly upon me; but the conviction that there must be some person in distress near by finally overcame them, and I went on. I had not gone twenty steps, and was almost in sight of the road, when I found an Indian girl lying on the ground, almost unconscious, but still moaning with pain. Closely examining her, I found to my horror that she had been shot through the breast! Her dress was soaked in her own blood, and she seemed at the point of death.

I did the very best thing possible under the circumstances; I hastened back to Bourmont, and summoning two of the men, brought them to the spot, and had them take up the poor creature and convey her to the house. She was placed in bed, and a doctor quickly brought from the settlement. I will not dwell on the details of this strange episode. Contrary to the predictions of the doctor, and against all appearances, the victim slowly recovered. She was a beautiful little creature, about fifteen years old, with delicate features, fine black eyes, and face hardly darker than that of many a white brunette. Her Indian name I have forgotten; it had something the sound of Meeta, and Meeta I always called her. I took a fancy to her from the first, and I nursed her myself with all the skill and tenderness I possessed. The doctor insisted that her surprising recovery was quite as much owing to me as to him; but doctors have a way of talk-

ing like that. At all events, Meeta fully recovered; and it was three months from the time she was taken into the house that she left it. During this time she had learned to talk English well enough to make herself understood. Concerning her misfortune, she knew absolutely nothing about it more than that she heard the report of a rifle, and was struck down by the bullet. I have always wanted to believe that it was a chance or stray shot; but I have always suspected that it was the horribly revengeful work of some man whose cattle had been driven off by the Indians. As to why she was such a distance from the settlement of the tribe, she could only say that she was used to taking solitary walks, and had protracted this one without realizing it. Poor Meeta!—her story, as she tried to tell it in her broken English, was very affecting to me. It appeared that she was the captive of this tribe; that she had been taken by them when very young, and had grown up among them. She was always treated coldly by them, and sometimes harshly; so she was lonely and sad continually. When I discovered this, I went to my father and asked him to give Meeta a home with us. He consented, as he did to everything I asked, and I flew back to her, and eagerly told her my plan, and begged her to stay with me always. There seemed very little of the Indian nature in her as she heard my offer; her eyes filled with tears, and she put her arms round me and kissed me. When she could talk, she told me in her broken way how much she should like to do as I wished, but that it was impossible. Why it was, she must not tell me; perhaps some day I would know, and then I would see that it was better for me that she had not remained with me.

All this was very mysterious to me then. I tried hard to understand what could be the true reason of her refusal, for I plainly saw that she really wanted to stay; but it was all a riddle. The reason has been made plain to me since, and I have had cause to thank God that the Indian girl persisted in having her own way. She left me and went back to the forest; and I felt heavy-hearted indeed at the thought that I was not to see the pretty, good little creature again. But I did.

Meeta left us about the tenth of October. Five days afterward, as it happened, Bourmont was filled with a lively company from

Philadelphia. At least once a year my father liked to have a house full of guests from the city, and to give free rein to his hospitality. He was in his glory on such occasions. The management of the house, the table, the whole establishment, in fact, was left entirely to his head man, and father busied himself with the pleasures of his guests. He went out with them shooting and fishing; he had card parties and dancing parties in the evenings, and he was careful that the table should present a feast in quantity and quality at each meal. Then there were a dozen different pleasant ways of passing the time that I need not stop to tell about; in brief, it was a delightful place and a delightful time to all. There were at this time at Bourmont, of these guests, a dozen gentlemen, and at least half that number of ladies of the families of some of them. I need only concern myself now, as I was chiefly concerned then, with two of them; both men.

They were just as different as day and night. Harry Grafton was the son and heir of one of the wealthiest men in Philadelphia; and nature had been quite as liberal to him as fortune promised to be. He was literally as handsome as an Apollo, splendidly educated, with a graceful address and wonderful powers of conversation. He could sing, he could dance, play on every musical instrument that we had in the house, and excelled everybody there in hunting and fishing. In fact, he excelled everybody there in hunting and fishing. In fact, he excelled in everything that he undertook, and made himself the admired of everybody. The other was Joshua Barton; a rather homely retiring young man, who said little in company, and could neither dance, play cards, nor do anything to amuse. He was a tutor in a Philadelphia college, and was said by those who knew him best to be very learned and very deserving. Spite of the general homeliness of his person, he had very handsome gray eyes; and I had seen him once or twice when they lighted up his whole face, as he talked on some favorite subject, and when he talked to me alone, very pleasantly and sensibly. I began to think him one of the kind of men who have to grow into a woman's favor; but I frequently heard remarks made that were not at all complimentary to "that tedious Joshua Barton."

There was a great contrast between the

two; and looking at the surface alone, it was immensely in favor of Grafton. I had long known both of these young men; and on this occasion they had not been at Bourmont a week before both proposed marriage to me—and both the same day! I gave neither a decided answer; asked both for time to consider; and, like a dutiful child, went to my father and told him all about it. His eyes opened wide as he listened, and he spoke out at once when I had finished.

"I'll never seek to compel you to give your hand where your heart doesn't go, Bet," he said; "but I do hope you'll say yes to Harry! In my opinion, there's not another fellow like him in the country. I don't say this because he's rich, or because he's handsome and full of tricks to please the ladies; but I think well of him because he's so manly and bold, and of course he must be as brave as a lion. Gad! I saw him bring down a deer yesterday on the jump at full three hundred yards. Could Josh Barton do that? I never heard of his knocking a squirrel off a limb with a shotgun. Some folks talk highly of Josh, and I suppose he is well enough, in some ways; but, Lord bless me, Bet! I want you to marry a man. I've been a soldier, and a good one, they say, and acted a man's part, and I'd hate to take any cheaper style of man for a son-in-law. And from what I see, I believe that Harry is a brave fellow, and that Josh is a kind of shirk. Now you know what I think; do as you please!"

Three days passed after this conversation, and I was still undecided. But for what followed, I think both my suitors would have returned to Philadelphia without a decisive answer. The fact was, I did not really know as much as I wanted to about either of them. Before dawn of the next morning I was somewhat enlightened.

It was a beautiful afternoon in October, and our guests were all about the house, amusing themselves as best they might. I was in the parlor, engaged with two of the ladies; when, looking from the window out upon the lawn, I saw the face of the Indian girl Meeta peering out from behind a bush. She hastily beckoned me to come out; and you may be sure I did so. Her story at this time was brief but terrible. With the greatest difficulty she had escaped the espionage that was constantly over her, and had hastened to Bourmont to

inform me that two hundred warriors of the tribe would leave the settlement at dark for the purpose of attacking our house.

"But what can they want, Meeta?" I cried, in my surprise.

Her reply was simply to raise her finger and draw a small circle on the top of her head. I hurried into the house, Meeta following me, and finding my father, told him her report. He asked her a few questions, and then bade me get the guests all together in the parlor as soon as possible. When they were assembled, he abruptly gave them Meeta's alarming news and said:

"The girl tells the truth; there is no doubt of it. These red devils are coming to-night to burn the house and murder us. If there were time, I might start you all off to the settlement; but there is not time; they will be here in an hour; and besides, we don't know but another party will attack the village before we can get there. Our only way is to fight!" And my gallant father's voice rang out with the old Revolutionary enthusiasm, and his eye flashed as he spoke. "Courage, my friends; we are not badly off. This house was built with a view to such attempts as this; you see that every window can be closed with a heavy oak shutter, bullet-proof; and there are small wooden blocks inserted in the stone between them, which, when pushed out, leave loopholes for muskets. Here are more than a dozen men; I have almost as many more among the servants, and we have arms and ammunition for all, and provisions to stand a long siege. Let us go to work, and give the red rascals a warm reception."

The news was heard with astonishment by all, and of course with terror by the women; but there was no useless crying or wringing of hands among them. Some of them, and I was one, did all that we could to help prepare for the defence; and though some were completely overcome, most of us behaved pretty well. The men turned in most manfully; and in an hour the house was barricaded thoroughly (as was supposed), and almost two dozen good defenders were distributed through the house, up stairs and down, at the loopholes, with arms all ready, waiting for the enemy. I suppose I ought to have been dreadfully frightened; but I was not; I was full of excitement, and anxious to do something to help. As for father, he was in his element; all



the soldier in him came to the surface at once, and he did not station himself at the loophole he had selected for himself until he had been over the house twice, to see that everything was in order, and to animate the defenders.

It was now almost dark. I was standing by father and looking from one of the loopholes, when I saw a dark object creeping along by the fence opposite me. I eagerly called father's attention to it.

"Where—where?" he asked.

"Just there by the fence! Now—don't you see it?"

"No—but you do. Here, take my rifle and shoot him as you would a catamount!"

I did not hesitate a moment. He pressed the weapon into my hands; and thrusting it from the loophole, I covered the Indian just as he was rising to his feet, and fired. He uttered a grunt and fell motionless. Half a dozen rifles spoke out at once from different parts of the house, and the terrible war-whoop from two hundred throats answered. Then there was silence for a few moments; the Indians had sought cover, and our rifles were silent. Suddenly there was a gleam of light—then another—and soon a bright flame shot up. My father groaned as he saw it.

"The devils have stolen all the horses and stock, I suppose," he said, "and now they are firing the barns."

As the flames increased and shed a stronger light, it was seen that every out-building had been fired. Several of the savages danced into view, uttering triumphant yells. A volley of rifle shots prostrated half of them, and the others fled yelling back to their cover. But it was not easy for them, in the strong light of the burning buildings, to find perfect concealment. They could not have done a better thing for our defence than to set these fires; and while the buildings were burning there was a continual succession of shots from the house. When the fires had died away, and darkness had succeeded, the savages made a strong attempt to batter down the rear door of the house with axes which they found in the barn. The darkness was so great that we could not see them; but so hot a fire was kept up from the loopholes in the door that every enemy was struck down who ventured up to batter at the door, and the attempt was abandoned. In this way the night passed. Our position seemed to

be impregnable; the Indians could make no impression anywhere, and they withdrew before daylight, carrying their dead and wounded with them. The number was never exactly known; but from all the information that could be had, it was believed that our bullets struck at least twenty. The outside of the doors and shutters were full of their bullets.

From the circumstance of my firing the first shot and killing the first foe, I became known as the "Heroine of Bourmont." It turned out that the designs of the Indians were known in advance at the settlement, and they were also repulsed there; but at least forty habitations in other places were burned that night, and more than a hundred men, women and children were massacred. A swift and bloody vengeance followed; eight hundred men were raised, armed and equipped within a month, and, led by my father, they practically annihilated the treacherous tribe.

To return to the house. We all gathered in the parlor after the enemy had retired, and deep and heartfelt congratulations were interchanged. It appeared that no one was wounded in the least.

"But where is Harry?" my father asked.

He was evidently not present; and no one seemed to know. The information came at last from Joshua Barton. He had been leaning on his musket, and now set it against the wall, and opened the door.

"I would like to have the gentlemen come with me," he said. "It would be better for the ladies to remain here."

Father told me the same night just what Joshua said and what he did. He told them that during the first half hour after the attack, he became nervous about the cellar, fearing that all the windows had not been barricaded. He went to see; and while descending the cellar stairs, he saw two Indians dragging a man out of an empty barrel. They had tomahawked him before Joshua could get his gun to his shoulder. He shot one dead, and rushed with clubbed musket upon the other. The Indian fled, and Joshua saw him leap out of an open window. He quickly secured it; and after satisfying myself that this was the only one that had been left unsecured, he returned to the upper rooms.

The man in the barrel was Harry Grafton.

His end was a miserable one, indeed; doubly miserable, because it gave the lie to

all the audacious claims of his life, to manhood and honesty.

"Well, well," said my father, "I was never so deceived in my life. To think that so likely a fellow should turn out a miserable poltroon! And that quiet Barton—how I was deceived there! Fought like a hero the whole time, besides killing the redskin in the cellar."

I wont make my story longer; in fact, there's no need of it. Joshua and I were married and lived fifty years together; and I never had the least cause to regret my

choice. We always lived here at Bourmont; and with me, until her death, which occurred twenty years ago, lived Meeta. She was my maid; and a most excellent one she was. I suppose some of you would like to hear some romantic ending about her marrying somebody; but I'm telling a true story, and I can't say anything of the kind. There were fellows enough wanted to marry her; but she sent them all off. She wanted nothing better than to live with her dear mistress all her life; and she had her wish.

## THE TWIN SHIPS.

Macy, W H

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## THE TWIN SHIPS.

BY W. H. MACY.

"I HAVE never told you," said Dave Dunn, as we sat together in the middle watch, on the barrel of the windlass, "about the time the old Castor was burned, or, rather, wasn't burned, from letting her caboose-pen run dry."

"No," said I, "I have never heard of it. Fire away, Dave, and give us the yarn."

I composed myself at once in a comfortable attitude, and prepared my mind to be well entertained. For Dave was a man of many adventures, and of infinite resources in the way of material for whiling away a long watch.

"I shipped at Sydney," he began, "in the barque Castor, for a whaling cruise on the Middle Ground. She was the only lime-julcer that ever I belonged to, and—"

"What do you mean by 'lime-julcer?'" I asked.

"Why, an English ship, of course."

"Why are they so called?"

"Because all English vessels on long sea-voyages serve out a certain allowance of lime-juice to every man, at stated intervals of time. They are obliged to do it—by Act of Parliament."

"Is that so?"

"Yes. They used to say that the main outfit of a Sydney whaler was made up of split peas, lime-juice, grog and coal-tar. We had pea soup seven days in a week, and lime-juice, according to the Act."

"But they didn't serve out coal-tar to the crew?"

"Who said they did? But they painted the ship with it, and in the Castor we used no other paint, for hull, spars or ironwork. All was tarred with one brush. However, she was a fine vessel, for all that; the usage was good enough, and the discipline not so taut as I had been used to in American whalers. We met with good luck, too, and were in a fair way to make a splendid voy-

age, when we lost our good ship—or she lost us, I hardly know which.

"We were boiling out a large sperm whale when we 'raised' more, and as it was necessary to keep the work going along, only two boats were lowered, in pursuit. I was in one of these boats with the mate, and we chased the whales, away several miles to windward, before we came up with them, so as to get fast." Then the second mate struck first, and that gave us a continuation of the stern-chase, for the whale proved a lively one, and kept carting him to windward at a smart pace. There was not much wind, and the ship, when we left her, was under easy sail, as is customary when trying out. The captain seemed to content himself with keeping sharp on a wind, on the same tack, intending, I suppose, to make a good long board, so as to fetch well up with us, when he *did* go about. So the consequence was, at sundown the *Castor* was nearly hull down in the Northern board, while Mr. Banks, the second mate, was still fast to a whale going to windward, spouting clear and strong, and we in the larboard boat had nearly pulled our arms out of the sockets trying to get up with him to reinforce him. Things looked, as our darkey midship-oarsman expressed it, 'kind o' jubeous,' as to being able to save the whale, especially as the weather looked indicative of squalls, and was hardly trustworthy.

"The mate, being a prudent man, and having considered all the chances, took upon himself, as the senior officer, to give the order to Mr. Banks to cut from his whale. This was done by certain movements up and down of the big waif, by means of which the several officers had established a regular code of signals for communicating with each other at a distance. The order was obeyed at once, as if his junior had been expecting and waiting for it; and we ceased our labors, letting our boat lie to for the second mate to come down to us.

"By the time we had joined company, and were running off abreast of each other within talking distance, it was almost dark, and we could no longer see the ship. But we felt no uneasiness about that; she must soon come round on the other tack, and the fire from her try-works would be a grand beacon to help us in finding her. There would be no advantage in exerting ourselves hard at the oars, or in setting the

lights in our boat lanterns; for we must see the ship long before those on board could see us. So we jogged along under our sails, talking about the hard luck of the day, and the necessity of being obliged to cut from the noblest whale of the season—for those that get away are always the biggest, as every whaleman can testify—until suddenly 'Light ho!' was cried by the boatsteerer in the head of the boat.

"'Where away?' said Mr. Warner, stooping his head to peer under the sail.

"'Here! four points off the port bow.'

"The mate seemed somewhat bothered.

"'Yes—I see it now—and I suppose that must be our ship; but that isn't exactly where I should have looked for her.'

"But the light very soon flared up brightly, showing, beyond question, that it was that of a fire; and it was decided that the ship must have tacked sooner than was supposed, which placed her in the unexpected position. A little freshening of the breeze seemed to help out this theory, and make us fall in with it the more readily. Besides, no other vessel had been in sight during the afternoon, that we knew of.

"'Well, there's no use hurrying,' said the mate. 'Let her jog comfortably. Take in the jib, Tom; we can sail that much faster than Mr. Banks, and we'll just about keep company, if we spare him the extra canvas.'

"'There she lights up!' shouted Tom. 'They must be stirring up the fires lively; or piling scraps on the back arches.'

"'Old Hallett!' roared Mr. Banks, in the other boat; and his crew took up the cry in chorus."

I interrupted the story again, to ask Dave what was meant by this exclamation.

"Well," said he, "I think you will hear it often enough when we get on the whaling-ground. It is a cry raised whenever a bright light is seen; and everybody makes use of the phrase. One sings out 'Old Hallett!' because another does; but it is very seldom that any one asks the why or wherefore."

"But what is the origin of it?"

"Ah, now, you've rather got me with that conundrum. The best explanation I have ever heard was, that it arose from an old fellow of that name somewhere, who never went abroad without carrying a bright light in a lantern. But I can't say whether that is really the starting-point of it or not.

It's like many other similar sayings, of quite as mysterious origin.

"Well, the light grew brighter and brighter, shooting up in a fierce flame heavenwards, until the truth gradually dawned upon us that the ship must be on fire! No light made by scraps on the try-works could illuminate the sky in that manner, or send up such tongues of flame. The order was given to pull ahead, and, under combined power of oars and sails, the boat leaped forward towards the distant light, the mate keeping his startled vision fixed upon it, without speaking for an hour, evidently under strong excitement. He no longer talked of keeping company with the waist-boat, and such was the difference in the rates of speed of the two, that our consort was soon left out of hearing astern.

"As we drew nearer, there was no longer any doubt that the good barque *Castor* was really a prey to the devouring flames. She had luffed up to the wind, shivering, and the flames were driving aft upon the mainmast and sails, while out of the stern windows could be seen the ruddy glare of the fire raging within, showing that all hope of saving her was past. But most mysterious to us was the fact that no living soul was to be seen anywhere within the radius illuminated by the burning ship. The boats were all gone from the cranes, and the davit-tackles hung dangling in the water, showing that the crew had taken to flight in a hurry. We thought it strange that they should not have lingered near, looking upon their late home until she should be entirely destroyed.

"While we lay on our oars, fascinated by the awful sight, there was a sudden crash, and a gap opened in the middle of the seething mass; and then suddenly a pillar of flame shot up masthead high, so fierce as almost to blind us for the moment, while the heat was so intensified that we were forced to pull to increase our distance, and to lie well out to windward of the ship. The try-works had settled through the deck, by the burning off of the carlines underneath; and as the mass of brickwork fell down into the bottom of the ship, carrying, of course, the pots with it, the whole body of oil took fire at once, and the conflagration now raged with redoubled fury. It was but a waste of time to look at it longer. Nothing could be saved from the wreck but our own lives, and no time was to be lost if we would save even ourselves.

"We had not spoken any ships on the ground for many days, and had no reason to think there were any near us. The most available land-fall for us would be some part of the Australian coast, we being then about midway between Australia and New Zealand. There was no doubt that our shipmates had already made the best of their way in that direction, having abandoned the ship just as soon as they were satisfied the fire could not be subdued.

"So, with heavy hearts, we again took to our oars, setting our sails too, for no time was to be lost. We had no provisions or water, beyond the little stock usually carried in the boats when whaling; and this, even by going on very short allowance, could not be enough to keep us alive more than three or four days. Luckily the wind favored us, and we made good progress, shaping our course due westward, for the object was to make the coast at any point as soon as possible.

"You may well believe our eyes were strained to the utmost towards every point of the compass next morning, and indeed, at all times, day and night; but we saw no vessel, nor anything of our boats. On the third day we made the land, to our great relief, as the weather looked threatening. But it was not until nightfall that we had approached near the shore, and not daring to attempt landing with the boats in the darkness, we coasted down the shore to the southward, towards Port Jackson Heads. It must have been near midnight when we discovered what we soon made out to be the light from a steamer's chimney; and placing ourselves in her way, we succeeded, by showing our boat-lanterns and shouting with the strength of our united voices, in arresting the attention of those on board. She was hove to, and never were poor sailors more overjoyed than we, when, worn with starvation and fatigue, we found ourselves in safety on the deck of the '*Albert*,' a little steam-packet which plied between Newcastle and Sydney.

"It was none too soon, either; for before morning one of those gales came on known on this coast as '*Brickfielders*,' and which, blowing against the prevailing current, always kick up such a dangerous chopping sea. In our open boats, weak and exhausted as we were, we should, no doubt, have all gone to the bottom.

"But the stout little steamer made good

head against the storm, and early the next day we gained the shelter of the beautiful bay which opens up to the city of Sydney. As we steamed up to the inner harbor, a barque was seen lying at anchor which so much resembled the old *Castor* that every one was astonished that two vessels could be found so exactly alike in hull, spars and rigging.

"Why, it is the *Castor*!" said I to the mate.

"Of course it isn't," he answered, curtly. 'How can it be the *Castor*, when we have seen her burned up in the middle of the Pacific Ocean? Are ships ever resurrected in that manner, I'd like to ask?"

"But I could swear to every rope in her," I insisted. And so I could; for before we were an hour older we had met our old shipmates, and were received with open arms by them on the deck of the real *Castor* herself, as good as new."

"But what ship was it you saw burning that night?" I asked, in astonishment. For Dave had stopped, and seemed to consider his yarn finished.

"It was her *twin*," he answered. "The barque *Pollux*, of Hobart Town, which was whaling on the same ground with us; but we did not know it, not having seen her. The two barques had originally been built for the same owner, and were exactly alike in every particular, below and aft. Both had sailed out of Sydney in their early career; but the *Pollux* had been sold afterwards, and her ownership changed to the other colony."

"Did she take fire from her try-works?"

"Yes. The officer of the deck was careless enough to forget his business, and let the caboose-pen run dry."

"But what became of her crew?"

"They were picked up next day by the *Castor*, which was cruising in search of us, and was astonished enough when she fell in with four boats full of men, where she was looking for only two. Our captain had made a miscalculation, and stood too long on one tack, and lost the run of us in the boats even before we had cut from the whale. And we, being misled by the light

from the *Pollux*, had gone still further out of the course which we should have steered to head off our own ship, after she tacked."

"But didn't your captain see the light of the burning ship?"

"Yes, but from a long distance, and thought it merely another ship boiling. He kept well to windward, and must have crossed our track without being seen or seeing us. He held his weather-gage all night, and the next day, running to leeward, with all his mastheads double-manned, he fell in with and saved the four boats' crews, as I said before; but nothing was to be seen of the ill-fated *Pollux* but a few charred fragments."

"He must have soon given up the search for his men," said I.

"Well, no. He cruised a couple of days all over that vicinity, and then concluded rightly that we must have given up trying to find the ship, and made the best of our way towards the Australian coast, as we would be likely to do. He then bore up for port, and, having the wind in his favor, he arrived and anchored in Sydney just in time to escape the gale which we encountered in the steamer. He brought in the whole crew of the *Pollux*, and landed them safe and sound; but they had saved nothing from their ship but just what they stood in. And this is the whole story of how the *Castor* wasn't burned up, but made a very successful cruise of it. Though if we had been picked up and carried to some other part of the world, as we might have been, we should have always reported, and, as we thought, truly, that we had all been eye-witnesses of the destruction of our own ship by fire."

"How much tobacco will you give me to believe that yarn, Dave?"

"Don't care a single chaw of tobacco whether you believe it or not. It's all true—a great deal more so, at any rate, than the old fable about the original *Castor* and *Pollux*, the twin brothers, who were said to have been sons of old Jupiter. Yet I suppose you will believe that yarn, because you read it at school."

## THE HAUNTED HOUSE.

Williams, William L

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pg. 189

### THE HAUNTED HOUSE.

BY WILLIAM L. WILLIAMS.

"SHOULD you like to hear a story of a haunted house to-night, young folks?" asked Mrs. Johnson.

"O, that will be splendid! I always like that kind of stories; I hope there will be a hobgoblin in it," said Carrie Blanchard.

"So do I," said Lizzie Hemenway.

"There used to be a haunted house in Bulgertown, where I visited one summer, and all the boys and girls would run as fast as they could when they passed it. Aunt Emeline said a former owner hung himself in the garret, and after that no one could live there without being frightened by strange noises up stairs."

Every one seemed pleased at the prospect

of such a story from Mrs. Johnson; stories of wonder, and mystery, and unaccountable horrors always being popular with children, and indeed grown-up people have a partiality to them.

"Many years ago, in the town of Boxford, there lived two brothers," commenced Mrs. Johnson, "by the name of Ripley. They were both engaged in business, one keeping a grocery store, the other a dry goods store.

"John Ripley was the grocer, and Martin Ripley was the dry goods merchant. Although brothers, the two men were very different, John having such a love for money that he would hoard it, and count it with all the greed of a miser. But Martin

cared little for money, beyond enough to supply his family wants, and keep his family comfortable.

"They were both young men when they were married, and commenced business at the same time. The money which they had to start with was inherited from their father, who was a hard-working mechanic, and had managed by diligence and economy to accumulate a sum of money, not sufficient to be called a fortune, but enough to be proud of, as every cent was earned by skill and industry. Old Mr. Ripley had purchased an old mansion-house, built in colonial times, and having a very quaint appearance. There were a great many gables and wings; in fact, the house looked like a conglomeration of every style of architecture. There were one or two stone towers, almost covered with woodbine and ivy, hiding from view the small diamond-paned windows which lighted them.

"At the division of the property, after the death of their father, this old house, with all its curious history, came to the share of John. He wanted to live in it, but his wife, who was rather a proud woman, preferred a more fashionable residence; so he let the mansion to a gentleman named Benson, who had been travelling for some months with his family in England and Germany. The Bensons had seen in their travels many old castles and ancient towers, and when they saw the old mansion belonging to the Ripleys, they had a great desire to live in it, and succeeded in hiring it.

"Things went on very smoothly for a time, until at last John Ripley, in trying to get more money, lost all that he had. He had been tempted to speculate, and failed. His creditors seized all his property, and among it was the old mansion. This was sold at auction by the sheriff, and Martin Ripley, in order to keep the house in the family, bought it. He had always had an affection for the place; it was where he was born, and every room in it was endeared to him by some happy recollection of his boyhood. There was the chamber where his mother passed so many days during her last illness, and he remembered how he would, on his return from school, run directly to her room, and receive her welcome kiss and words of praise. Martin had always wanted to own this house, and he felt disappointed that it should have fallen to John's lot, but now was a chance to buy it, and have it for

his own. John was quite angry when he saw that Martin owned the old house, and he came forward to claim it, saying that it was not his house, and the sheriff had no right to sell it. He had given it to his son Edwin, some months before, and therefore it could not be taken to pay his debts.

"This was very shallow reasoning; but John was envious to see his brother Martin getting along so prosperously, and he determined to deprive him of the house if possible. A lawsuit followed, and after being in court for a long time, it was decided that the house rightfully and lawfully belonged to Martin Ripley,

"Everybody was pleased at the result, for they liked Martin very much, and thought that the old house ought to be his. They gathered around and shook hands with him, while John stood alone, feeling keenly his misfortunes. He had attempted to cheat his brother, and he knew it, and this very feeling made him unhappy. Martin notified the Bensons that after that date the rent for the house must be paid to him instead of to John, as heretofore. Mr. Benson willingly complied with this request, and thus John Ripley saw the old mansion pass from his possession.

"One evening, a few weeks after this, as Mr. Benson was sitting in his parlor alone, reading an interesting book, he was disturbed by a singular noise in the adjoining room, as he thought; it sounded like a muffled stroke, and he counted twelve such strokes. He laid his book down and listened, with his heart beating fast, as it is apt to do with persons who are startled. All was still, and Mr. Benson was about to resume his reading, and consider the sound he had heard as some harmless noise, magnified by his imagination, but he had scarcely fixed his attention on his book, when distinct and regular footsteps were heard, almost in the very room where he was sitting. Jumping to his feet, Mr. Benson opened a door into the hall, and another one into an adjoining room, but no one was seen or heard.

"His family had been abed for more than an hour, and there was not one of them that could step so heavy as that, either. It was a mystery that disturbed Mr. Benson; he found it impossible to read any longer, so he closed his book, locked up the house, and went to bed himself. All the next day he thought of the strange sounds which he had heard the evening before, and he deter-



mined to watch for a repetition of them. At night he was again sitting alone in the same room, deeply absorbed in one of Hawthorne's quaint bewitching romances; the hours flew rapidly by, the fire in the grate burned low, and an awful stillness reigned, when suddenly the same peculiar smothered stroke was sounded twelve times. Mr. Benson's blood ran cold in his veins. He listened; all was still again as the grave—he could hear nothing but his own breathing. But in a minute or two the silence was again broken by the sound of footsteps. At first they seemed far off, yet nearer they came and nearer, until it seemed as if they were in the same room; but then they grew fainter, and seemed to be passing on, until the sound ceased, and all was still again. Mr. Benson was sorely puzzled; he did not believe in ghosts or spirits; he knew that these noises could not occur without some agency, and he meant to discover what it was. Lighting a lamp, he visited every room in the old mansion. Many of them were unoccupied, and were only used to store things, or for the children to romp in. Coming at last to a chamber occupied by his two daughters, Louisa and Emmeline, he opened the door, and saw that they were awake.

"Is that you, papa?" asked Emmeline. "You have been here before, this evening, have you not?"

"Been here before!" exclaimed Mr. Benson, afraid that his children might have been disturbed as he was.

"Yes, papa; we were awakened by some noise, and I heard your footsteps distinctly. I thought that you went through our chamber," said Louisa.

"I have been up stairs; probably you heard me as I went by the door," said Mr. Benson, unwilling to terrify his daughters by telling them what he had heard.

"He now felt confident that they were awakened by the same singular noise which had startled him in the parlor. The next night and the next this same mystery was repeated, and all Mr. Benson's investigations failed to throw any light upon it. Each night the same noise was followed by the same footsteps. On the third night, Mr. Benson, having now become used to the phenomenon, was musing upon it, and trying to find some way to solve the problem, when he was startled by a succession of screams resounding through the hall, and piercing his ears with their shrillness. The

next instant the door flew open, and Louisa and Emmeline rushed into his arms, white, trembling and terror-stricken. For some minutes they could hardly speak, and then they clung to their father, and said:

"O, we cannot sleep in that chamber again. We saw a horrible face, and heard dreadful sounds. Somebody is certainly in our room."

"Mr. Benson quieted them as well as he knew how, but they could not be induced to go to their chamber again. They had heard the same noise as their father, and were trying to get asleep, when they heard a slight noise, and saw a hideous face flash out from the wall. The eyes were like burning coals, and it grinned with teeth like the tusks of a wild boar. This was too much for the Bensons. They resolved to quit a house haunted so fearfully. Martin Ripley was astonished when he heard the cause of their removal; he would not believe it; but when the Bensons had moved away, and the next family were equally horrified, and staid there only a month, then he began to think that there must be some foundation to the stories. The fact of the house being haunted became known in the town, and exaggerated accounts were told, until but few persons dared to pass it in the evening. Of course no one would hire it, and Martin began to think it was a poor piece of property to own, for from disuse it was rapidly getting out of repair. Grass and weeds grew in the garden walks; fat old spiders spun their picturesque webs across the window-panes, and whole armies of rats and mice raced and rioted through the deserted rooms. Bits of plastering fell from the walls, and an unhealthy dampness pervaded every room. Martin saw that something must be done to keep the mansion from going to complete decay, and the only sure remedy was to remove the reputation it had acquired of being haunted. So he determined to occupy the house himself, and devote his time to unravelling the dreadful mystery. His friends advised him not to undertake so hazardous a job, for they were sure he would regret it; but Martin had made up his mind, and would not be dissuaded. He moved into the house, and deeply did he regret it, as we shall see.

"He did not have to wait long for the goblin noises to commence. The house had been aired and cleaned from cellar to attic, comfortable furniture had been placed in

some of the rooms, and Martin Ripley sat in the parlor, waiting for the approach of the hour when the sounds were usually heard. He was alone in the house; no one was willing to accompany him in the undertaking. A small table stood beside him, with a lamp on it, and a loaded revolver. He tried to read, but could not fix his attention; his mind was filled with thoughts of ghosts and goblins and apparitions, and he almost wished that some spectre would walk in and try to frighten him. The noise came at last, with its regular repetitions, and soon after, the footsteps were heard approaching nearer and nearer, until they seemed to recede again, and finally were heard no more. Martin Ripley was convinced that these things were done by some human agency; he did not believe in disembodied spirits playing such pranks; taking his lamp and revolver, he began a search through every room, opening each closet-door, and examining thoroughly every hiding-place. At length he came to the room once occupied by Louisa and Emmeline Benson. It was a very old-fashioned chamber, with a great deal of panelling about it, and had large deep closets. Martin was particular in his search here, but found nothing. He was just leaving the room, when he noticed that another light besides his own was glimmering on the walls. Turning around, he saw over the fireplace a horrid face—the same hideous one which had frightened the Benson girls so much. Quick as thought, Martin raised his revol-

ver, and fired at the object. An unearthly yell followed, and the room was in total darkness. Martin's lamp was extinguished, and he had to grope his way from the chamber to the parlor, where he could relight it. He then returned to the haunted room. Groans, as of some one in distress, were heard, and in the wall was a small square hole, as if a panel had been removed. Climbing to this aperture, Martin easily broke away the wood-work, and found a large recess inside. He entered, and was shocked to see his brother John groaning on the floor, with his arm broken by a pistol shot. The mystery was now unravelled; John confessed to having haunted the house, in order to make it worthless to his brother. He had long since discovered a private entrance to one of the old towers, completely hidden by woodbine; this led to a secret room, by a staircase constructed between the walls. In this room he had arranged a clock so that it only struck once a day, and that was at midnight; by muffling the bell, the sound was so disguised that no one would think it was a clock that made the noise; the footsteps were his when he ascended the hidden staircase, and the horrid face he had purchased at a toyshop, illuminated it with a candle, and held it to the aperture in the wall. Martin was sorry for the injury he had done to his brother by using his pistol so hastily, and John repented of the mean way he had adopted to damage Martin. A reconciliation took place, and after that the brothers lived in peace and good-will."

## THE HEIRESS AND HER GUARDIAN.

### A TALE OF ENGLISH COUNTRY LIFE.

BY MRS. H. CAMERON.

#### CHAPTER I.

##### SOTHERNE COURT.

A FAIR flat valley wherein a river winds and winds like a streak of light; low rounded hills, purple with evening shadows, melting away into a yellow sky; russet woods, wide meadows, cows waiting at the farm gates, wagons jogging wearily homeward through the lanes, and over it all the golden hazy glow of an autumn sunset.

This is what Sotherne Court—red-gabled and many-windowed, standing aloft on the slope of the hills—looks down upon, whilst Juliet Blair, fair queen of the old house and of the many rich acres on every side of it, sits alone under the sycamore tree on the lawn.

She had thrown off her hat, and the slanting sunlight flickered through the drooping branches over the small dark head and among the rich laces and draperies of her dress. Here and there a yellow leaf had fluttered down upon her from the tree above. A little shower of roseleaves lay at her feet, and a sleepy bumble-bee kept on buzzing backwards and forwards in front of her.

She had neither work nor book; her slight hands were clasped together idly upon her knee, and her face was turned towards the fast sinking sun across the valley below. It needed not the warm glow of the sunshine to set that face alight.

The small mobile features, the rich curves of the sensitive mouth, the dark passionate eyes inherited from the young Spanish mother who has lain for years in the churchyard below, all speak of an ardent and impulsive nature; a nature that is intense in its capabilities of loving and suffering, yet with that strange mixture of weakness and recklessness, that is so often the fatal curse of an impetuous character.

Miss Blair of Sotherne Court is by no means an unimportant personage in her native county. For years she had been the idol of a doting father who, after the unhappy death of his young wife, in the first year of their marriage, had centred every

hope and thought in the child whose birth had cost its mother her life.

Miss Blair—she had never even in her baby days been called anything else—was, in her father's eyes, a person of the greatest importance; everything was done with a view to her comfort and in accordance with her wishes. From the time when she could speak her own mind—and it was pretty early in life that she learned to do so—Mr. Blair would never so much as cut down a tree on the estate without consulting his little daughter. And even when, with that fatality which seems sometimes to take possession of old gentlemen, he suddenly brought home a second wife when he was nearly sixty—a person most unsuited to him in every way—he lost no time in making Mrs. Blair number two understand that she was to be but nominal mistress in the house that was eventually to belong to his young daughter.

Mrs. Blair sat for two years at the head of her husband's table, and then the old man died; and the day after the funeral Juliet, who at seventeen was fully conscious of her new dignities, sailed up to the post of honor at the dinner-table, and motioned to her stepmother to take the place at the side which she had hitherto occupied herself; a position which Mrs. Blair was far too wise a woman to dispute.

For Juliet was now mistress where she had been but daughter. The house and all the broad lands were hers, and the widow was left with only a modest jointure, to which Juliet at once, in accordance with her father's wishes, added the request that she would make her home at Sotherne Court as long as it should suit them both to live together.

Mrs. Blair accepted the offer, as she herself would have said, "in a right spirit." People said it was an unjust will and hard upon her; but, if she thought so herself, she never said so, nor gave Juliet for a moment to understand that she was otherwise than perfectly satisfied with the arrangement.

A guardian and trustee had been appointed to the young heiress; a certain Col-

onel Fleming, the son of an old college friend of Mr. Blair's, who held a military appointment at Bombay, where he had been for many years. When Mr. Blair died it was not considered necessary for Colonel Fleming to come home. A great many letters passed between him and Mr. Bruce, the family solicitor; sundry papers and documents were sent out to him, which he duly signed and returned; and he wrote two letters to his young ward, whom he had not seen since she was five years old.

After that Juliet heard nothing more of her guardian for several years, and privately hoped she might not in any way be troubled with him. But when she was twenty-one there were sundry alterations in rents, and transfers of leases, an accumulation of voluminous accounts, and so much business of different kinds to be gone through, that Mr. Bruce deemed it advisable to have the advice and presence of Miss Blair's guardian. He therefore wrote to Bombay and urged him to come home.

Colonel Fleming thought Miss Blair and the Sotherne estates an intolerable nuisance. He had lived in India for so many years that he had lost his interest in England, and he had no particular desire to come home. It had always been a puzzle to him why Mr. Blair, who had been very kind to him many years ago, when he was quite a young fellow just joining his regiment, should have chosen him, of all people, to be his daughter's guardian. As long as it entailed no trouble he did not so much object to it; but when it came to going home to look after all these things which he hardly understood—why, it was a nuisance, no doubt. Still, if Mr. Bruce considered it essential, of course it must be done.

Mr. Bruce did consider it essential, and Colonel Fleming came home.

Colonel Fleming has now been at Sotherne Court a week, and for several hours in the day he and Mr. Bruce, who is also staying in the house, are closeted together over the accounts; after which the keeper is sent in with Miss Blair's compliments to ask whether they would like to shoot, and the two gentlemen go off together after the pheasants.

Perhaps it is the good shooting, or the quiet and peace of the country, or the luxurious ease of the comfortable old house, or perhaps it is all these things together and something more; but Colonel Fleming is in-

expressibly charmed and soothed by the life at Sotherne Court, and he begins to hope these accounts and papers which he dreaded so much at first may last for many days longer. Juliet, from her seat under the walnut tree, catches sight of the sportsmen as they come wandering homewards; she puts on her hat and goes to meet them coming up the hill.

Hugh Fleming thinks he never saw a sweeter type of womanhood than this girl who is his ward, and yet almost a stranger to him. Juliet is in black, a rich heavy silk deeply trimmed with lace (she never wears any but the handsomest dresses), a white shady straw hat over her eyes, and a knot of scarlet geraniums in the front of her dress; and she comes towards him with a little timid smile that somehow cannot be usual to the imperious Miss Blair.

In after years he often thought of her as he saw her that evening.

"Have you had good sport?"

She looked at her guardian; but little Mr. Bruce, fat and fussy, with his face very red from his walk, and his hat pushed far off his bald head, answered her:

"Capital, my dear, capital. Bigley wood is as good covert as ever; and I can tell you, Miss Blair, you have got a guardian who is a first-rate shot!"

"I am afraid I am wasting my time dreadfully, Juliet," says Colonel Fleming, turning to his ward. He called her Juliet from the first in his letters, and he cannot drop it now. "I have done no work to-day to speak of."

"The more time you waste at Sotherne the better I shall be pleased, Colonel Fleming," answers Juliet, with her little gracious-hostess manner. "Besides, in such lovely weather it would be a sin to be indoors. We shall not get many more such summer days in October."

"No, indeed." And then they saunter homewards together, the two men one on each side of her.

Mr. Bruce begins chattering about the people at the farm—Joe Biggs, who has set up a public in the village; Mary Hale, who wants to be infant school-mistress—and a hundred other little local topics which he and Juliet have had in common for years, and which Miss Blair, as Lady Bountiful of the parish, is bound to be consulted about.

And Colonel Fleming walks on beside her in silence. He is a tall slight man, with a

solidly upright figure that makes him look younger than he is; there are deep lines scored upon his face, and silver streaks in his dark hair and mustache; and he is tanned, and bronzed, and weather-beaten by the Eastern skies. He is by no means a handsome man, and yet the strongly marked features have a charm of their own that almost gives the effect of beauty.

Juliet keeps covertly glancing up at him from beneath her dark lashes, but, if he sees her, he does not seem to do so; his eyes are fixed on the house in front of them.

Juliet, imperious little queen, accustomed to have everything her own way, and tired, perhaps, of good Mr. Bruce and his voluble stories, gets impatient.

"You are very silent, my guardian; what are you thinking of?"

"Of you, my ward," answers Hugh, turning to her with one of those sudden smiles that are so fascinating on a grave stern face.

"Of me!" she cries, flushing up with pleasure.

"Yes, of you, Juliet, as you were years ago, when I was last at Sotherne, a little dancing bright-eyed child, clinging on to your father's hand; an impetuous, self-willed little monkey you were, I remember. I was wondering if you were much altered now—now that I find you a tall stately young woman, with ever so many lovers."

"You will find me pretty self-willed still, especially about the lovers!" said Juliet, laughing.

"Ah! I have no doubt."

And Juliet blushes rather prettily; she could hardly have told why.

And so they come to the house.

"How is your stepmother's headache?" asks Colonel Fleming, as he makes way for Juliet at the doorway.

"O, she won't appear again to-day," answers the girl, carelessly.

"She seems a great invalid."

"O, dreadful!" says Juliet, with a little sneer that her guardian thinks rather unbecoming.

Mrs. Blair does not appear at dinner-time, so the three dine and spend the evening alone; a quiet peaceful evening. Old Mr. Bruce gets drowsy after the good cookery and the excellent wine, and dozes in his armchair; Juliet, at her piano, croons over all sorts of dreamy old songs to herself one after the other; and Colonel Fleming sits

bolt upright under the reading-lamp at the centre-table, with a volume of Napier's "Peninsular War" in his hand.

It is a book he professes to admire immensely; but, if any one had taken the trouble to watch him narrowly this evening, it might have been seen that during a whole hour he has turned over only one page, and that his eyes were fixed over the top of the book on to the fire beyond.

Now and then, as some familiar old strain comes from the singer behind him, a sort of spasm of pain fleets rapidly across his stern features; but for that you might imagine his thoughts to be far away.

"When thou art near me sorrow seems to fly;

And then I feel, as well I may,  
That on this earth there dwells no one so blest  
as I!

But, when thou leav'st me, doubts and fears  
arise,

And darkness comes where all before was light.

The sunshine of my life is in those eyes,  
And, when they leave me, all within is night,"

sings Juliet, with her rich contralto voice, trembling with a tenderness and passion of which she herself is hardly conscious.

"Sing that again," says Colonel Fleming, as the last notes died away.

"Do you like it? I did not know you were listening; it is one of my pets."

And once more the sweet old song rings through the silent room.

But she is conscious of an audience this time, and does not sing it quite so well.

He does not interrupt her again.

Old days, old scenes, conjured up by the quaintly sweet song, are coursing rapidly through his brain. He sees once more through the mist of years a rose-covered cottage near a wood, an open window, himself a happy penniless lieutenant, leaning outside against the window-sash, listening to a sweet voice that sings over again:

"The sunshine of my life is in those eyes,  
And, when they leave me, all within is night."

And then, from the gloom towards him, advances a girl with blonde head and blue eyes; who stretches out her hands to him for one moment—one moment, and she is gone; and he sees only a face; the same face, but cold, and white, and impassive, as he saw her last—ah! God, in her coffin!

"O my darling, my lost darling!" he murmurs below his breath.

And meanwhile Juliet, at the piano, is

singing a joyful song about hope, and new life, and love that never dies.

She is nothing to him, this dark-eyed girl with her passionate voice; it is but a fictitious tie that has bound them together. He knows her not; she has no part in his life or in his past; she does not even remind him in the faintest degree of that other who has gone, and whose memory is dearer to him than the sight of all other women; and yet there is a something in this imperious girl who is haughty to all others, and who yet can be humble with him—who is a queen, and yet a child—that attracts him wonderfully.

Colonel Fleming throws Napier's "Peninsular War" impatiently aside, and walks across the room to the back of her chair.

"You have given me a great deal of pleasure by your singing, Juliet; a great deal of pleasure, and a great deal of pain."

"Pain?" she asks, looking at him inquiringly; "I am sorry for that; but if the pleasure has been greater than the pain—"

"I don't say that; the pleasure was pain. The two are often so mixed up as to be indistinguishable. You are perhaps too young to know this."

"No, indeed, I understand you perfectly. Was it my singing that pained you?"

"It recalled the past," he answered, almost sternly.

She looked at him a little curiously. What was his past? she wondered.

"It is that old song; I am very sorry; I will never sing it again."

"Don't say that, my dear child. I told you the pain was pleasant; and I dare say I shall often ask you for it." He laid his hand lightly on hers as he spoke, in a manner that was almost fatherly. Juliet hardly seemed to appreciate it; she rose and began putting away her music.

"If you will excuse me for saying so, I cannot help thinking that there is something morbid and unreal in trying to foster and cherish the memory of any sorrow that is long ago gone by. Is it not a proof that the trouble is a trouble no longer if we have to make a perpetual effort of conscience to keep it alive?"

She could not tell what made her say this, not kindly nor gently, but rather bitterly and hardly. Colonel Fleming looked at her for an instant in astonishment, and then said, somewhat coldly:

"If you were older you would perhaps understand better how some things in one's life are so part of one's self that no effort is required either to forget or to remember them. I trust, my dear Juliet, that you may never find out this by experience."

And then he turned away and took up his "Peninsular War" again. But afterwards, in the night, he lay awake long and thought much of her words. They had cut him like a knife when she had spoken them, but, after all, was she not perhaps right? Was the memory of that dead girl indeed a living sorrow to him, or had the sorrowing for her become a habit, or almost, as Juliet had said, an effort of conscience? Colonel Fleming found that he could give no satisfactory answer to these questions.

Meanwhile, Juliet had gone to bed in a great fit of indignation against herself. Why had she spoken so to him? Why had she shocked and startled him with her unkind and heartless words? What had possessed her?

She could not say. Only she knew that she felt a blind unreasoning hatred against that "past" of which he had spoken so regretfully, and yet so tenderly—a woman, of course! What past can a man have in a woman's eyes that is not connected with her own sex?

But how foolish of her to imagine that her guardian, Colonel Fleming, old enough nearly to be her father, had had no such past, no woman to love or to deceive him in all the years he had lived!

And, after all, what could it matter to her—Juliet Blair—whether this were so or not? She asked herself this last question several times over, and ended by answering it to herself very definitely before she went to sleep. Decidedly no; it did not matter to her in the least!

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## CHAPTER II.

### MRS. BLAIR'S FIRST MOVE.

THE following morning found Colonel Fleming to all appearance hard at work in the library. The table was covered with papers and books—big parchment deeds, account books of all sizes and kinds, letters, and notebooks full of pencil memoranda; and in front of them all sat Miss Blair's guardian, with his forehead leaning on one hand and a pen in the other.

Mr. Bruce had set him his task, and left him, if the truth must be told, to slink away and read the morning papers.

"It is quite necessary that you should understand the nature of all these things, my dear sir," he had said; "if you will kindly read these deeds very carefully through and go over the Holmby farm accounts, I will look in upon you by-and-by and see how you are getting on. I should only bewilder you if I were to stay with you now, and it is perfectly simple, my dear sir, perfectly simple, I assure you." And with that Mr. Bruce had retired to the breakfast-room, with the "Times" under his arm, chuckling inwardly at the prospect of a good hour's quiet read before he need in any way disturb the labors of the much bewildered colonel.

The library windows opened on to the rose garden, and there among the late autumn roses, with a basket and a pair of big scissors, wandered Juliet, cutting a few flowers, and clipping off a dead leaf or a drooping branch here and there; not doing much good thereby, and considerably disturbing the peace of mind of the head gardener, who hovered about in the distance eyeing her suspiciously.

A pretty graceful figure in perpetual motion, passing and repassing continually before the library windows;—what a fatal distraction for a man with sheets of dry accounts spread out before him, for which the beauty of the morning alone made him feel sufficiently disinclined!

To do Miss Blair justice, she was quite unconscious of being watched. The writing-table in the library was not close to the windows, and there were muslin draperies in front of them, which made it difficult to see plainly into the room from the sunshine outside, even if it had occurred to her to look that way, which it did not.

Juliet knew that she was handsome, but I doubt if she often thought about it. It was not as a beauty that she estimated herself. She had plenty of self-esteem, but it was as Miss Blair, the owner of Sotherne, whose position gave her a right to a voice in everything that concerned her native county, who indeed had a right to a vote—she often said indignantly—as much right as Squire Travers and Sir George Ellison, her neighbors on either side! If Juliet valued herself at all, it was in this light, and not at all on account of her beauty.

Moreover, Juliet was singularly simple-minded. She flitted about among her roses because she wanted some flowers for her drawing-room, and enjoyed cutting them herself, without a passing thought of what sort of a picture it was she made, as she moved to and fro before the windows.

Meanwhile Colonel Fleming was looking at her intently. How graceful she was! How beautiful! And what a fine character was traced on that open fearless face! How wonderfully she interested him! Was it not certainly his duty as her guardian to study her character and learn to understand and know her thoroughly? Of course she was nothing to him personally; a mere child, albeit a most charming one. She had not the sweet gentleness of that other woman who was the love of his life, and who was dead; but, after all, that did not matter to him, for of course she was nothing, never could be anything to him of that kind; all that sort of thing was over and done with for him forever. He was her guardian; simply and solely her guardian, and she his ward, his child almost. And surely it was most proper and most right that he should try and win her affection and confidence, in order that he might obtain that influence over her which her poor father would certainly have wished him to exercise.

Just at this point of his reflections there came shambling across the lawn towards Miss Blair a tall loosely built young fellow about three-and-twenty. He had fair straight hair, and blue eyes, in one of which was stuck an eyeglass, and a pale but not bad-looking face, with fairly good features set in a little straw-colored frame of young whiskers.

He came and stood behind Juliet as she bent over her rosebushes, looking very nervous and shy, and didn't seem to know quite what to do with his arms and legs.

"Hallo, Cis!" she said, turning round suddenly upon him; "I didn't see you. How are you?" And she put out two fingers to him.

Cecil Travers took the fingers, pressed them adoringly between both his hands, and bent over them in speechless worship.

"Home for your holidays, Cis?" said Juliet, unconcernedly snipping off a rose with her disengaged hand and not looking at him as she spoke.

"Holidays! You mean vacations!" answered the youth, rather indignantly; "why

—what are you thinking of, Juliet? Don't you know that I have left Oxford for good now? I have been in Scotland shooting lately," he added, rather grandly.

"O—ah! yes, I forgot," said Juliet, coolly going on with her snipping and clipping.

He stood by her for a minute or two in silence, watching her.

"Have you nothing to say to me at all, Juliet? Here have I been away two months, and I thought you would be glad to see me back, and you don't speak to me, you don't even look at me!"

"I am very sorry, Cis; I am sure I don't mean to be unkind to you; what shall I say to you? I hope you have enjoyed yourself—how is your father? and have you brought any message from Georgie? and—why, Cis!" turning upon him and looking at him for the first time full in the face, "why *how* your whiskers have grown!"

Now, if there is anything a young man of three-and-twenty, who has left college and considers himself in every way a man, hates, loathes and detests, it is to have remarks made upon his improved looks, height or hirsute adornments, especially when, as in this case, the remark is made laughingly by the object of his affections, whom he worships and adores, and to whom he has been in the habit of writing the most passionate and despairing love sonnets, sitting up late every night composing them for the last two years, and then burning them in the candle before getting into bed.

Juliet, fair object of all my hopes and fears,  
For whom I nightly shed these bitter tears,  
Low bowed beneath thy feet I lie,  
Smile once upon me, or I die—

ran the last of these productions. Luckily Juliet had never seen any of them, or how she would have laughed!

And now this divinity for whom he said he shed tears nightly, and under whose feet he was supposed to be stretched at full length occasionally, looked at him with those great deep eyes of hers, which in another epic poem he had compared to the stars of heaven, and told him deliberately that his whiskers had grown!

"If you can't find anything better than that to say, I'd better go," he said, turning away with a very red face.

"My dear Cis, don't be so silly." And she held out her hand to him, which, of

course, he seized upon, and came back close to her at once.

"If you wont stare at me in that lackadaisical way, I shall have plenty to say to you, and of course I am delighted to see you back. Here! hold my basket for me, and then I can go on with my roses and talk at the same time. Now, let me see; what news have I? O, you know my guardian is here?"

"So I heard. What a nuisance!" said Cis, quite restored to felicity, and following her about with the basket in both hands.

"Not at all," said Miss Blair, with dignity; "I like Colonel Fleming very much."

"You didn't think you would before he came, and I suppose he is a stupid dried-up old fogy."

"Nothing of the sort," answered Juliet, sharply, with an indignant flush on her face—she could hardly have told why. "Colonel Fleming is a most charming man, and I wont hear him spoken of disrespectfully; and, Cis, if you can find nothing to say but what is rude and disagreeable—Here! give me the basket."

"O Juliet, Juliet! don't be angry with me; don't take the basket away; I'll say anything you like." And between them the basket rolled to the ground, spreading the roses about on the lawn. Cis took the opportunity of catching hold of Juliet's hand and pressing it eagerly, whilst she burst out laughing at his agitated and piteous countenance.

And Colonel Fleming, inside the library, leaned both elbows on the table and looked on frowning. "Confound that impudent puppy!" he muttered. He could not hear their voices, but the acting of the little scene was pretty plain to him.

The young fellow's adoring looks, the way he bent over her hand, the half-quarrel, the reconciliation, and then the scuffle over the basket, and Juliet's merry laughter—it was all such a natural little love scene to be enacted between two young people on a sunny morning among the rosebushes.

"Ah, I see you are looking at them. Don't they make a pretty picture together?" said a soft suave voice behind his chair.

Colonel Fleming jumped up hurriedly. Behind him stood a lady in the most becoming of lilac cashmere morning-gowns, softened by rich Valenciennes lace at the throat and wrists. She leaned one elbow on the top of his armchair and held up a



gold eyeglass through which she looked admiringly at the young people outside in the garden.

She might have been eight or nine and thirty, and had evidently been, indeed she still was, a very pretty woman. Her hair, fair and soft, if a little thin, was billowed up into numberless curls and puffs above her smooth white forehead, and surmounted by the tiniest and daintiest Valenciennes lace cap. Her complexion was of that indescribably delicate transparency which suggests irresistibly the presence of rose-powder and veloutine; her eyes, blue and large, although a little cold and hard, were traced round their lids with a dark line which surely nature alone could never have drawn there; and her lips were of that brilliant coral hue which no young blood of twenty ever gave; in a word, we all know the sort of woman—a beautiful make-up—the details were revolting, but the whole effect was enchanting.

"Such a pretty picture!" said this lady, again referring to the couple in the garden, who by this time had moved off nearly out of sight.

"Mrs. Blair! good-morning. I hope your headache is better to-day," said Colonel Fleming, as he jumped up with a start that was almost guilty.

"A little better, thanks," she answered, with a resigned sigh, sinking down into a low armchair. "I am a sad sufferer, you know; the circumstances of my life have quite shattered my health—quite shattered!" she repeated, with a wan melancholy smile.

"Indeed, I am very sorry you have such bad health," answered he, not knowing quite what form of sympathy was expected of him.

"However—ah, well! I don't wish to speak of myself, Colonel Fleming; I never think of myself, as you well know. It was of that dear child we were speaking—our child, I might almost call her, might I not?" And here Mrs. Blair looked up at him with a smile that was almost seraphic.

The colonel bowed stiffly. It was but a few minutes ago that in his own thoughts he had called Juliet his child, and felt quite fatherly towards her; but that was before the appearance of that lovesick-looking youth; and, moreover, the notion of a joint property in her with Mrs. Blair was not altogether agreeable to him.

"You see how it all is with our dear child, don't you, Colonel Fleming?" continued Mrs. Blair.

"Indeed! I hardly know what you refer to."

"Aha! sly man!" said the lady, tapping him sportively with her fan. "Ah, you gentlemen always pretend to be so impassive in matters of love. Now love is my atmosphere, my life! I worship a love affair. To see two young hearts drawn together in pure confiding affection, is a sight to make angels weep with joy!" And here Mrs. Blair, to show her sympathy with the angels, applied the corner of her lace pocket-handkerchief to her eyes, looking furtively at it afterwards to make sure that she had not rubbed off any of the bismuth.

Colonel Fleming pushed his hand into his trousers pockets, stared at his own feet, lifted his eyebrows, and said, "Ah, yes; very true!" with the air of one who expects shortly to be hanged, after the manner of men in such embarrassing circumstances.

"So sure you would agree with me," murmured the widow, with a sigh. "You will feel, I am sure, what a comfort it must be to me to see everything going on so well with my darling Juliet and Cecil Travers—so suitable in every way; in position, in fortune, in mind, and in age—don't you think it a great thing for people to be well-matched in age, Colonel Fleming?" And here she glanced up at him with a little cunning look in her cold blue eyes.

"Certainly, Mrs. Blair; but you yourself—"

"Ah, don't speak of my unhappy life! pray spare me allusions to my widowed state. It is because, alas, I felt the discrepancy myself; because, because—" Here a gentle fit of sobs interrupted her, and she retired again behind her handkerchief.

"My dear Mrs. Blair!" remonstrated Hugh Fleming, feeling more and more ill at ease. "I am sure I am quite distressed to have recalled anything painful; pray, forgive me."

"Say no more, dear friend," said the lady, holding out a white hand towards him, which common politeness forced him to hold for a moment in his own. "Say no more; I know your good heart, I can appreciate the delicacy of your sentiments; but to return to our beloved girl. Is it not a comfort to think that a husband is already found for her; one who is suitable to her,

so desirable in every way, and so devoted to her, so devoted to her?"

"Am I to understand, Mrs. Blair, that your stepdaughter is engaged to this Mr.—Mr. Travers?" said Colonel Fleming, with a cold stiffness which he in vain attempted to conceal.

Again Mrs. Blair looked up at him with a quick sly glance of curiosity.

"Well, not engaged exactly," she resumed, looking down again and smoothing out the soft folds of her dress. "I suppose to say *engaged* would perhaps be rather premature; but the dear children understand each other thoroughly. Cecil is most eager, dear fellow, but Juliet is a little coy and uncertain as yet. Of course girls are always timid in such cases, as I was myself, I well remember!" with a little sigh over the recollection.

"Ah, then Juliet is not quite so devoted as the young man!" said Hugh, with a little smile.

"Now, now, colonel, you mustn't be hard on the dear child. No lack of tenderness and heart *there*, I can assure you. But girls ought to hang back a little, and it has been so long planned and arranged for her—her dear father was so anxious, and settled it all long ago with old Mr. Travers—and he spoke of it on his deathbed, he did indeed, almost with his dying breath; and the properties adjoining and all make it so very important—and Mr. Bruce and I of course have always felt it our duty to place it before her, and we do *hope*, Colonel Fleming, that we may count upon your support and influence in this matter, as you know she must have your consent before she marries. I do hope you will not let any little dislike you may feel to the scheme stand in the way of her dear father's last wishes."

"I, my dear madam! what can you be thinking of? I have no dislike whatever to any scheme for Miss Blair's happiness; my only wish is to do what is best and most desirable for her; what other object could I possibly have?"

"Thanks, thanks, dear friend," murmured Mrs. Blair, again putting forth her hand, which Colonel Fleming was again obliged to take; it was a very pretty hand, as he could not help noticing as he bowed over it. Poor woman, she seemed very devoted to Juliet's interests, and if she was a little affected and gushing, why, was it not a sweet feminine failing? And then she

was a pretty woman still, in spite of the pearl powder and rouge, a very pretty woman; a graceful figure, too, he further reflected. And so he did not feel very hard-hearted towards her, although she had managed to worry him considerably about Juliet. After all, said Hugh Fleming to himself, impatiently, what did it matter to him, as long as the boy was steady, and fond of her, and a suitable match, as no doubt he was? That was all he, Colonel Fleming, had to do with it. She might possibly be worthy of better things, but then women are always fond of throwing themselves away. Nine out of ten clever women are fools in that one matter alone, the matter of the men they marry. If Juliet had set her heart on this lanky youth, and her father had wished it, and her stepmother and Mr. Bruce also were in favor of it—why, there seemed nothing more left for him to do but to set the bells a-ringing and to give her away with a smiling face. And then one comfort of it would be that his guardianship would be over, and he would go back again to India, and wash his hands of the whole business forever. Yes, it was much the best thing for everybody concerned, and would simplify matters very much for himself.

And then he roused himself with a half-impatient sigh to listen to Mrs. Blair, who was still going over the many advantages of the match.

"He has known her all her life, you know, and so thoroughly understands and appreciates the dear girl; and, being the only son, of course he comes into whatever money there will be, as well as the property. The daughters have their mother's fortune. Nice clever girls the Misses Travers are, and so fond of darling Juliet—they make quite a sister of her already; indeed, the whole family are ready to welcome her with open arms. I am so glad to have had this talk with you, Colonel Fleming, and to have secured your sympathy in the matter. I felt so sure that your admirable good sense would make you take the same view of the subject that I do; though I fear you don't care so much for the *sentiment* of love as I do, you naughty, heartless, matter-of-fact man!" And here Mrs. Blair again brought her fan playfully into action.

"I certainly am not given much to thinking about love affairs, if that is what you mean, Mrs. Blair," said Colonel Fleming,

good-temperedly. "The position of a father to a full-grown young woman is a new one to me."

"Ah, yes; and you so *thoroughly* put yourself into the place of her dear father, don't you, Colonel Fleming? So *nice* of you!" and again went that covert glance up at him from those sharp-looking eyes. This time Colonel Fleming caught the look and it set him thinking.

Had this pretty *passee* beauty, with her silly gushing affection and her civil speeches to himself, any double meaning in all that she was saying? Was she cloaking a secret enmity under the guise of friendship and frankness? or, gracious heavens! had she read him better even than he could read himself?

And through all the tanned bronze of his weather-beaten face, Colonel Hugh Fleming turned red at the bare idea of what she might have seen, or might have fancied that she had seen, of his innermost thoughts.

### CHAPTER III.

#### THE TRAVERS FAMILY.

RATHER more than three miles distant from Sotherne Court stands Bradley House, the residence of Mr., Mrs., Master, and the Misses Travers. It is a long, low, irregular, white building, with no architectural beauty, and in a very dilapidated condition indeed. The mouldy plaster is peeling off the walls in many places, the window-sashes and door-frames have been guiltless of paint for years, the garden is weed-grown and uncared for, the chickens and dogs wander alike unrebuked over the once trim Italian parterre in front of the drawing-room windows. In a word, the general appearance of the house is poverty-stricken and neglected. And yet Squire Travers is not at all a poor man; he has a good moderate fortune derived from a small but compact property, which if it does not show quite the same high standard of model farming as do the adjoining acres of his wealthier neighbor, Miss Blair, is still fairly cared for and productive. Moreover his wife has a few thousands of her own, quite enough to portion off his unmarried daughters comfortably. There is no reasonable cause why the plaster and paint should be dropping off the outside of the house unheeded and unrepaired, nor why the Turkey carpet in the dining-

room should be threadbare, and the stairs carpetless, nor why the whole of the antiquated mahogany furniture should be dropping to pieces unmended all over the house.

No reasonable cause I have said—no; but there was a cause, and many people, including Mrs. Travers herself, and also her son Cecil, and her daughter Mary, considered the cause a very unreasonable one indeed.

For Squire Travers kept the hounds, and for a man of small property and moderate means, to divert those moneys which should by rights have been spent on the paperer, the painter, the upholsterer and the cabinet-maker, upon hounds and horses, huntsmen and whip's wages, and compensation to farmers, was felt by sundry members of his family to be a grievance indeed. But old Thomas Travers had kept the hounds for years, as his father had done before him, and he often said he would starve himself and his family on bread and water sooner than give them up.

If you will go round to the stables at the back of the house you will see a very different state of things. There in the red-tiled courtyard, kept as clean and neat as the deck of a yacht, the numerous grooms and stable-boys are bustling backwards and forwards, in and out of the long rows of stalls and loose boxes which take up two sides of the square; no lack of paint and plaster here! The stalls are light and airy, the woodwork is polished till it glitters, the horses are sleek and shiny, and in good condition; all is life, and brisk business, and order; and Mr. Davis, the stud groom, swags about superintending everything and everybody, with his hands in his trousers' pockets, a straw in his mouth, and a villainous-looking but perfectly bred bulldog at his heels—"for all the world like a dog!" as says an admiring under-housemaid, who worships him adoringly at a distance.

If I were to take you on to the kennels, a mile and a half off, you would see the same story; buildings in first-rate repair, with all the modern improvements carried out to perfection. The stables, the huntsman's house, the kennels themselves, everything in apple-pie order; and meanwhile the squire's wife catches her foot in that hole in the carpet every time she goes into her bedroom.

The decorations of the entrance hall indicate sufficiently well the predominating influence in the household. Hunting-crops,

spurs, bits, fox brushes, heads and pads, arranged in artistic patterns, literally line the walls, while glimpses through the open door of the Squire's study, reveals the same style of ornament relieved by hunting and sporting pictures all over the walls of that most cosy-looking apartment—for there is no such room for comfort, and ease, and luxury in any house, large or small, as the master's "den." Here resort all the members of the family when they desire a little peace and enjoyment; when they want to fly from the practising of Maria's scales and Czerny's exercises on the drawing-room piano, or from the squalls and shouts of the children's games along the passages on a wet day, or from the stiff decorum of the lady visitors in the morning room. Here are comfortable chairs on which, unreproved, you may repose your feet if you feel so disposed, even if your boots are heavy or bespattered with mud; here you may smoke your pipe or drink your brandy and soda, resting your glass as you do so on the carpet at your feet with no dread of rebuke before your eyes; here you may snooze away a Sunday afternoon over the last new novel or the "Sporting Gazette," perfectly safe from the inroads of the Reverend Snuffles, who, even if he chance to visit the house during the afternoon, is not likely to venture into the inner sanctum and to catch you at it.

Squire Travers's "study" was a haven of rest after this sort. Many a long hour had he and his eldest daughter, Georgie, spent together in this cosy retreat whilst the other members of the family were employed in other and more homely avocations; the squire dozing over his pipe, and Georgie writing letters in her father's name to the farmers, or settling in her own mind all about next month's meets, or often merely conning over the ordnance map and going over again in imagination some famous run of last season.

For Georgie Travers was her father's own daughter. A slight, wiry-looking little creature, with a blonde head and small baby features; she had, nevertheless, a perfect seat on a horse, a wrist as strong as a man's, and the most indomitable pluck and nerve of any lover of hunting who followed her father's hounds. And keen! Why, there are no words to describe Georgie's keenness in the noble sport. Wind or rain, early or late, nothing stopped her—she was often

out and away on winter mornings long before her mother opened her eyes to her wearisome life, or her sister Mary had turned round shivering in her bed to ring for her cup of tea.

Near or far, wet or fine, no meet was ever without Georgie Travers's slight figure, well balanced on her lean thoroughbred chestnut, or on one of her father's big blood-looking bays, being seen close to the squire's side when the hounds threw off.

Georgie is her father's secretary and right hand, much to her mother's disapprobation, who thinks her whole conduct unfeminine and indecorous, and often suggests that she should superintend her younger sister's practising.

"Let her alone," growls the squire; "let her alone, ma'am. I want the girl myself;" and so Mrs. Travers is silent, and Georgie takes up her abode in her father's study as a matter of course.

The father and daughter are there now very busy together. The squire is in top-boots and breeches; winter and summer alike, he is always attired in these symbols of his profession, from morning until dinner time, Sundays excepted, when he dons a frockcoat and sombre-looking trousers in which his burly form looks sadly out of place.

He sits leaning upon the table with both arms and dictating to his daughter, who is scribbling away for bare life. Cub-hunting begins next week, ushering in the more solemn rites of November, and pretty well every farmer in the county has to be written to. Georgie has a beagle pup secreted on her lap under the table, which she keeps furtively stroking with her left hand, whilst a superannuated hound, blind with one eye and otherwise considered past his work, and so delivered over unto her as a pet, lies close to her feet on the folds of her dress.

"And I propose drawing the Colebrook woods at six o'clock on Monday morning"—reads Georgie aloud after her father's dictation—"and should be glad to know if you have many foxes in your own covers," continues the squire.

"Why, not one, papa; you know there's not one! I believe that old Briggs has trapped them all the summer," cries Georgie, excitedly.

"Shouldn't wonder—surly old brute—but we must write civilly all the same; he knows very well what to expect if he has

trapped them, that's all. Make haste and sign it; that's the last. Why do you keep that pup on your lap, child? It is covered with fleas—puppies always are. What a girl you are!" adds the father admiringly, as Georgie stands up and hugs the puppy, perfectly regardless of its reputed inhabitants.

"You ought to have been a boy; can't make out why you weren't. Ah, well!" with half a sigh, "go and find that big milk-sop brother of yours, my girl; I must give him a dressing now, I suppose!"

Georgie lingers a minute putting away her writing-case.

"Don't be hard on poor Cis, papa; you know he isn't strong."

"Not strong? Pooh, fiddlesticks! What business has a great big fellow six foot high to be ailing like a girl? I've no patience with such nonsense; d'ye ever hear *me* say I'm not strong. D'ye ever find *me* not able to be up and after the hounds at six o'clock in the morning? d'ye ever hear *me* say I've got a headache or a pain in my chest or my back? and I'm sixty and your brother's twenty-three! All d—— nonsense I say," said the squire working himself into a rage; "it's all your mother's molly-coddling has done it, I say; and a precious miff she's made of him. A son of mine who can't ride to hounds—ugh!" and the supreme contempt and disgust expressed in the final ejaculation made Georgie laugh in spite of her sympathy with her brother.

Mr. Travers, like many people blessed themselves with robust health and a strong constitution, regarded delicate people with the utmost contempt. It was almost a sin in his eyes not to be able to walk and ride like an athlete. It was a perpetual sore to him that his only son should be so weak and unequal to physical exertion; he could not understand it, nor, indeed, believe in it at all, and nothing would persuade him that Cecil was not in a great measure shamming.

He was never tired he said; he was never ill. If he did feel a little squeamish in the morning, why, a pint of home-brewed ale and a good gallop across the fields put him all straight in half an hour! And then, when Cecil shook his head and doubted whether such remedies would have the smallest effect in his case, his father lost his temper, and turned round and swore at him for a coward and a fool.

Good-hearted little Georgie took her brother's part and tried to shield him from

the squire's wrath; but she was not free herself from a certain amount of pitying contempt, born of a perfectly strong body and a healthy appetite, for the delicate indolence of her brother. Like the squire, she thought Providence had made a mistake, and that she ought to have been the son and Cis the daughter.

She went away to find her brother, with the puppy still in her arms, and Chanticleer, the one-eyed, toothless old hound, following close at her heels.

"Cis, papa wants you in the study."

Master Cis was lying down on the sofa in his mother's morning room, with an open book of Browning's poems on his chest, his eyes closed, and his arms thrown up behind his head. Mrs. Travers, a pale washed-out-looking woman in drab, sat hard by, dictating a French story to Flora, aged twelve, whilst through the open door in the adjoining room could be seen the second daughter Mary, who, reclining on an armchair with a novel, was supposed to be looking after the four-finger exercises of little Amy, the youngest child.

"One, two, three, four—time, child!" in Mary's cross sharp voice.

"*Is n'avaient plus—l'esperance—de sauver—les naufrages*"—slowly draws out Mrs. Travers from the table.

"Do you think they will be saved?" asks Flora, breathlessly, as she writes down an agonizing description of the shipwreck of an unhappy pair of lovers.

"Not a doubt of it; and they'll marry and live happy ever after!" breaks in Cis, reassuringly from the sofa, thereby showing that he has been listening too.

And then comes Georgie with those awful words, "Papa wants you in the study, Cis."

"Your brother has a headache, Georgie," says Mrs. Travers, deprecatingly.

"Well, it will be much quieter for him there than here with all the lessons going on."

"I wish you wouldn't bring those nasty dirty dogs here," says her mother; but little Flora has slipped down from her chair and thrown both her arms round Chanticleer's neck, and is kissing him rapturously on his blind eye.

"Flora, you naughty child! come back to your chair this minute. I declare, Georgie, you quite smell of the stables, and I wish you wouldn't come in here disturbing your sisters at their lessons."

"The dogs aren't a bit dirty, mamma; they are as clean as Christians, and, if I do smell of stables, it's not at all an unwholesome smell; and I've only come to give papa's message to Cis," says Georgie, answering her mother's complaints categorically, as she does the farmers, in the letters she is accustomed to docket and answer.

"Come along, Cis; make haste!"

"My poor boy!" sighs his mother, looking after him.

"What's it about, Georgie; is he angry with me?"

"Not more than usual," she answers, laughing, as they go out together; "but, if you would just try and please him sometimes, he would be so much gentler to you. Now, why didn't you go out and see them exercising that new mare this morning, as he asked you to do at breakfast, instead of lounging on the sofa with that trash?" she added, pointing contemptuously to the poetry book.

"Browning is not trash," said Cis, indignantly; "and what do I care about new mares."

"Ah, what indeed!" said Georgie, turning off from him with a sigh; and, passed out through the open hall door, she took the slanting path across the paddock that led towards the kennels, with Chanticleer and the "pup" following boisterously and noisily behind her.

As to Cis, he waited for a moment irresolute outside the study door, before he could summon up courage to turn the handle.

He stood very much in awe of his father, and these private conferences in that cosy little room were apt to be of an unpleasant and stormy nature.

The squire's first words to-day, however, were in an amicable tone of voice.

"Well Cis, my boy, have you been to have a look at that young mare?"

And Cis had the presence of mind to answer, "Not yet, sir."

"Ah, well, didn't suppose you would; but it isn't of that I wanted to speak; light your pipe, boy; ah, no, by the way, you don't smoke; it makes you feel sick, don't it, eh?"

This was another sore point with the squire, that his only son should not be able to smoke a quiet pipe with him; and he was forever pretending to forget it in order to remind him of this delinquency and to sneer at him about it. Cis certainly had

something to bear from his father, too; he got very red and did not answer.

"Well, Cis, I want to talk to you about Miss Blair."

"About Miss Blair, sir?" stammered Cis, getting redder still.

"Yes; you know very well my wishes on that subject; it's high time you made the running there, you know. She's a fine girl, and a good girl, and goes deuced well across country, too—not to be compared to your sister, of course; but still she goes very straight indeed, and the property fits in very well; a fine property and a nice girl—I don't know what more you want, Cis."

"I assure you, sir, my dearest wish, my greatest joy would be to induce Juliet to be my wife. I love her dearer than I love my life."

"Ha, ha, ha!" interrupted the squire, with the most irreverent guffaw; "ha, ha! don't go rehearsing the proposal to me, my dear boy. What's the good talking of love and sentiment and bosh to me? That's all humbug. What does all that signify? The girl has got a pot of money and a fine property—you needn't say any more about it. Go in and win if you can, and make haste about it. I want you to do something to the old place when I'm gone, Cis. I don't suppose you'll keep the hounds. Ah, it's a pity Georgie wasn't the boy! But if you marry Juliet Blair you'll live at Sotherne, and have a little money to do up the old house for your mother and the girls. It's a fine match for you, my boy."

"I don't think of that for one moment, sir, I assure you," said the boy, rather hotly.

"Well, then, you should think of it, Cis. Why, what do you suppose I married your mother for?"

"Love, sir, I trust," answered Cis, gravely and reproachfully.

"Not a bit of it. It was for that slip of land that dovetailed into the Cosby farm down on the flat. I'd always coveted that land, and then she had her bit of money besides, and I don't say, Cis, that I didn't like and esteem her, and she's a very good woman in her way; but I might have liked and esteemed her ever so much, I shouldn't have married her if it hadn't been for the land and the money. Lord bless you! An eldest son must think of these things; there's no particular virtue in marrying for love; it's all the same in a dozen years' time whatever you've married for; only, when you've

got a something substantial besides, it makes everything pleasanter for life."

Cis looked very grave during this philosophical enunciation of his father's views upon marriage in general, and his own in particular, and again signified his perfect willingness, nay, eagerness, to marry Miss Blair for herself and her money combined.

"Only," he added, sadly, "there's one thing against it. I'm afraid she won't have me."

"And shouldn't be a bit surprised if she wouldn't," said the old man, veering round unreasonably. "Why don't you ride, and hunt, and go about like other men, and do something to make a sensible girl proud of you, instead of wasting your life doing nothing?"

"I haven't done badly at college, sir," remonstrated Cis; "and it is not my fault I am not strong enough for violent out-door exercise. You forget that I took a first in mods."

"What's mods?—a parcel of Latin and Greek, and rubbish! I'd rather you'd have broken your collar-bone over a stiff bit of timber! Not strong, indeed! No wonder you're not strong—always molly-coddling over the fire with a book, and never clearing your brains out with a good gallop across the country. I sent you to college to make a man of you, sir, not to learn a pack of Latin and stuff!"

At which novel view of university education Cis raised his eyebrows and laughed.

"Ah, you may laugh, but you'll laugh the wrong side of your mouth when you find Miss Blair won't have you. There'll be Wattie Ellison and a dozen more after her before you—"

"Why, Wattie Ellison is Georgie's lo—" began Cis.

"Nothing of the sort," thundered the squire. "Don't go coupling your sister's

name with an idle young pauper like that, though sure he can ride a bit. Georgie knows better. But you'll let Juliet Blair slip through your fingers if you're not sharp. Go and propose, boy; don't be a fool. Girls always come round at last if a man keeps on worry, worry, worry at 'em. Turn 'em round; keep their heads straight at the fence; if they refuse the first time, turn 'em round and send 'em at it again," he added not unkindly.

"I am most anxious to marry her, sir, but she has refused me dozens of times;" and Cis got very red and looked intensely miserable.

His father burst out laughing. "Ah, she has, has she? Well, I am not surprised; but you were a boy then; now you've come home for good and you're a man—as much of a man as I suppose you ever will be," he added, ruefully; "and I wish you to go as often as you can to Sotherne, and do your very best to succeed. Do you understand me, Cis?"

"Certainly, father," answered the youth with alacrity; and then he went round to his father's chair and laid his hand on his. "I wish I could ride better, father; perhaps if I marry Juliet you will forgive me that."

"All right, my boy; we'll square it off so. God bless you!" And the old man gave the young one a grip of his hard old hand. He was a little touched in spite of himself; and after Cis had left the room he sat still looking after him out of the window, as the boy wandered idly on to the drive in front of the house. "Well, well, I suppose he and I don't understand each other; he's a well-intentioned lad, too, and Juliet Blair would improve him wonderfully; but he's an awful sawney. Dear, dear, dear! what a pity, what a sad pity, Georgie wasn't the boy!"

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

## THE HEIRESS AND HER GUARDIAN.

### A TALE OF ENGLISH COUNTRY LIFE.

BY MRS. H. LOVETT CAMERON.

#### CHAPTER IV.

##### GEORGIE'S LOVER.

GEORGIE TRAVERS and the dogs were by this time at the kennels. Everybody thought a great deal of Miss Georgie there. The whip touched his greasy old fur cap to her, as he ran to open the gate for her with a grin of pleasure on his weather-stained old face; Ricketts, the huntsman, came forward respectfully to know what he could do for her, and called out her favorite hounds to be stroked and caressed; and then of course she must go into the stables. There were a few young horses always kept up at the kennels, in addition to the usual staff required for the hunt, and amongst them was the mare that Cis had been told in vain to go and look at that morning.

"I came to look at that mare," said Georgie; and the mare was trotted out for her to see.

Georgie stood aside and looked at her with the critical eye of a connoisseur.

She patted and stroked the animal; then stooped down and felt all her legs deliberately one after the other with her strong little hand in a scientific manner that made old Ricketts say afterwards to Tom the whip, that he had never seen her like for a woman; "a real frustrate un she be, to be sure, Tom!"

"I think I'll ride her this winter, Ricketts; she'd carry me well."

"Like a bird, miss. She's a bit ticklish in her temper; but Lor' bless you, miss, there aint nothing you can't ride."

"Well, put a skirt on her this afternoon for a bit, and then you can bring her round to-morrow morning and I'll see how I like her."

That was all the breaking-in for ladies' riding that Georgie's mounts ever had; the spice of risk and danger about riding a horse that had never carried a lady before, was just what she enjoyed.

She left the two men staring after her with looks of respect and admiration, and went her way down a neighboring lane,

deep cut between two high banks, still closely followed by the dogs.

She had not gone very far before a thudding sound of horse's hoofs in the field to the right of her was greeted by a sharp bark from the puppy. Presently a horse's head and forelegs appeared over the top of the hedge, and there dropped into the lane just in front of her a young gentleman on a gray pony.

In a moment he had dismounted and was eagerly coming towards her.

"Wattie!" she exclaimed.

"My little darling, how good of you to come!"

"I didn't come on purpose—really. I was at the kennels, and I thought—I thought—"

"Little story teller! You thought you would come home this way on the chance of seeing me—eh, Georgie?" and Wattie Ellison proceeded to draw a very unresisting little woman close into his arms, and there to kiss her fondly on both cheeks, whilst Chanticleer, evidently suspecting mischief, pawed up against the back of his coat with very muddy feet, and a gruff bark of remonstrance.

Walter, or as he was commonly called Wattie, Ellison was a nephew of Sir George Ellison, whose property adjoined Sotherne on the further side. He generally resided with his uncle, having neither profession nor income of his own, and the baronet, who was rather fond of him, made him free to the use of his hunters and the shooting of his game. Otherwise Sir George could do nothing more for him; he was a poor man with a large family of his own, and his eldest son had already burdened himself with the cares of matrimony in the shape of an invalid wife and four little children. This second family all lived permanently in the paternal mansion, and Wattie, in common with several of the younger sons, had an attic in an upper and unfrequented region apportioned to him, which he was free to occupy whenever he chose; and, be-



ing an orphan with no other family ties and no means whatever at his disposal, Wattie did choose to occupy his attic very often, notably during most of the shooting and hunting seasons. He picked up an odd five-pound note now and then by selling a few water-color sketches, for which he had a good deal of natural talent; but even at this poor make-believe of earning money he did not work hard enough to make anything of a livelihood. As long as his uncle's house, and table, and horses were free to him, he did not seem to have the energy or perseverance to work hard at that or anything else.

He was a general favorite with every one. Tall and good-looking, with merry gray eyes and curly brown hair, and the prettiest little mustache in the world, he was just the sort of man to be spoilt by the whole female population. Women and children adored him. He rode so well, was a crack shot, such good company in the billiard-room at night, and altogether such a manly young fellow in every way, that he was sure of a welcome in every house he went into. But, alas! he was hopelessly ineligible; and dowagers with marriageable daughters found themselves forced to turn a deaf ear to his fascinations.

He was nothing but a penniless ne'er-do-well, utterly without prospects. And yet what does this charming young scapegrace do but go and fall madly in love with the squire's darling, precious Georgie! And, worse, Georgie falls in love with him.

Their love affair was as yet in its earliest stages. They had not dared to tell the squire. They continued to meet half by stealth, half by accident, in their walks and rides, and in truth were so insanely happy in all the excitement and novelty of each other's affection, that they had scarcely had time to think of the future or to consider their situation with anything like serious attention. Woman-like, Georgie was the first to come out of this ecstatic fool's paradise. For the first time to-day she spoke to him seriously.

"Wattie, dear," she said, as they went down the lane together, hand in hand, like a couple of children, whilst the pony and dogs followed after them at their own sweet wills; "Wattie, I am afraid papa will never hear of it."

"Have you said anything to him, yet?"

"No, I have not dared. Poor papa, it would upset him so horribly. I felt the

way once by saying something about you, but he got so angry I did not venture to go on."

"He hates me, I suppose," said Wattie, with a rueful face.

"Nonsense! only you know, dear, you are not exactly a good match, are you?"

"Not exactly;" and they both laughed.

"If you had a profession," continued Georgie, "even if you made nothing at it, it would sound better; and you see papa would like me to marry well. I am afraid he will stop it utterly."

"And, if he does stop it utterly, what shall you do?" He stopped before her, holding her small face in both his hands, and forcing her to look up into his eyes.

"I shall obey him, Wattie." Her voice was very low and gentle, but there was a decision and firmness in the little face that filled him with dismay.

"You would give me up!" cried Wattie.

"Not so, darling," answered the girl. "As long as I live I shall consider myself bound to you; I will never marry any one else. Perhaps, in time, he will relent and come round; but till he does I will never marry you. Don't hope it." With all her tenderness and love he felt quite sure she meant what she said, and turned away from her with an impatient sigh. "But, after all, why should we think of the worst?" said Georgie, slipping her arm confidently under his.

"Why, indeed?" answered her lover, smiling. "I dare say the old boy won't be quite such a stern hard-hearted parent as we fear. It will all come right in the end, Georgie, depend upon it!"

Wattie was of a hopeful disposition (very poor young men often are); nothing much worse could happen to him; he had nothing to lose, and it was quite on the cards that something better would turn up. But Georgie knew better. She knew what her father was, and she did not in the least think that things would come right in the end; not for a very long time, at least; not probably, she reflected sadly, till she was getting old and *passée*, and Wattie, perhaps, half tired of a long and well-nigh hopeless engagement.

But she did not trouble her lover with these sad forebodings. For his sake she would be hopeful too, and look at the bright side of things as much as possible.

But as they walked on together they both by instinct avoided any further unpleasant

consideration of what Mr. Travers would say to them.

There was nothing unusual in Georgie's walking about the lanes with young Ellison. He was so well known by everybody, and such an *enfant de la maison* in every family in the county, that he was always turning up at odd places and with different people. Moreover, he had been Georgie's recognized slave and worshipper for ever so many years. Mr. Travers himself, who had no objection to him in the light of an admirer, whatever he might have in the more serious phase of lover, had often and often deputed young Ellison to look after his daughter in a stiff run. He generally gave her her leads, opened gates for her, tightened her girths, or altered her stirrup if she required it, and often rode back with her at the end of a long day, when the hounds left off far from home. He had been constantly thrown in her way, and certainly the squire had only himself to blame if these young people had fallen in love with each other.

He made the mistake of which so many parents are guilty. He allowed them to be constantly together under the most familiar circumstances, until they had fairly lost their hearts to each other and it was too late; and then, as you will see, expected to be able to stop all intercourse between them and to be obeyed like an autocrat.

I am inclined to think the much abused Belgravian mother, who warns off younger sons from her flock as she would the small-pox or the scarlet fever, is the less culpable of the two. She, at all events, prevents the mischief, whereas parents who behave as did our friend the squire, cause their children an amount of misery and suffering which they can scarcely, it is to be hoped, understand or be aware of; whilst by a little forethought and care it might all have been easily avoided.

It was arranged between Georgie and her lover before they parted, that the dreaded communication was to be made by her to her father at the first seasonable opportunity.

"Not this week, I think," said the girl; "we are so busy just now. I must wait, I think, till the 1st is over, and then, if we have anything of a run, it will put him in a good temper, and I can tell him in the evening."

"As you like, you wise little woman. By the way, what are you going to ride this winter?"

"The old chestnut, and I think that new mare papa bought last week; I have just been to see her."

"What, that dark brown mare he bought down in Warwickshire? Don't ride her, Georgie. She's a nasty brute."

"Why, what do you know of her? I like her looks myself, and papa bought her half on purpose for me."

"Well, I heard a bad character of her down there; she's a runaway or something; she'll break your neck some day, Georgie."

"O, I am not afraid; you won't get rid of me quite so easily as that. I shan't run far away from you, Wattie, and if I do I'm sure it will be a pleasure to you to run after me. And now I must say good-by—indeed I must."

"Little wretch! how quickly the time goes! I can't bear parting with you. I don't half like your having said you would throw me over if your father orders you to," he added, as he bent over her, and kissed her tenderly.

"Ah, you don't know what papa and I are to each other; I couldn't break his heart, Wattie, and I never will."

Poorchild, poor little Georgie! There are some human vows that surely must be listened to with shouts of mocking laughter by the unseen world of spirits above and around us, if indeed, as it is said, they can read all our future lives as in a book.

Georgie Travers went home from that meeting with her lover to find herself very late for luncheon, and her mother scolding at her in her peevish ill-tempered voice.

"Where have you been, Georgie? The mutton is quite cold. What have you been doing all this time?"

"I've been at the kennels," answered the girl, with that sort of half truth which is no lie in the eyes of most women. "Never mind about the mutton, mamma. I'll have some ham. I am sorry I kept you waiting."

"Always at those horrid kennels with the stable-boys!" grumbled her mother; "so unladylike and unfeminine!"

"Let the girl alone!" growled the master of the house with his mouth full of suet pudding, flaring up, as he always did, in defence of his favorite child. "I don't want her turned into a cry-baby, like some of your children, Mrs. Travers; I wish her to go to the kennels. Did you see the mare, Georgie?"

"Yes, papa, I thought I'd ride her to-

morrow. She isn't vicious, is she?" she asked, with a little hesitation in her voice.

"Vicious? Who has been putting such rubbish into your head? As quiet as a sheep. Little Flora might ride her—or Cis!" he added, with a cut at his son that was certainly rather cruel and uncalled for.

To everybody's surprise, Cis got up with a very red face, and said:

"Well, then, I will ride her, sir, if you will let me."

The squire looked taken aback.

"Nonsense! You can't have her; she'd kick you off," he said, rather confusedly.

"Then she isn't safe for Georgie," persisted Cis.

"Safe as a house for her; you can't ride," said his father, gruffly. It must be confessed that he was a very trying sort of father to have.

Mrs. Travers said fretfully that she couldn't have her dear Cis dragged about on wild horses.

"Who wants to drag him, ma'am?" shouted the old man, fairly in a rage. "He wouldn't be half such a ninny if it wasn't for you. Keep him at home and give him some pap!" and he pushed his plate away—having previously quite emptied it—and bounced out of the room in a fury, slamming the door behind him till the door-frame, already in a very rickety condition, shivered and threatened to come bodily out into the room.

Mrs. Travers whimpered, and Cis got up and kissed her, while the younger girls looked at each other with meaning glances and faint titters, awestruck yet delighted, as children generally are, in a row between their elders.

Amy seized the opportunity of the general confusion to help herself largely to strawberry jam with her plum cake; whilst Flora slipped down under the table with a cold cutlet under her pinafore, with which she proceeded to feed old Chanticleer, much to that ancient hound's surprise and delight.

Meanwhile Georgie ate her ham in silence; with the pleasant consciousness of being the cause of the dispute, to sharpen her appetite.

Such scenes were of daily occurrence at Broadley House. Who does not know of such households—households where everybody is at sixes and sevens; where fathers and mothers, sons and daughters, are perpetually misunderstanding each other's motives; where there are two factions, the

father's and the mother's, and one child sides with one, and one with the other, and where little quarrellings, and bickerings, and divisions widen the breach slowly but surely day by day!

When Georgie swallowed down her lunch in a hurry and slipped away from the room, her mother made sure she had gone to her father to talk against herself and was proportionately aggrieved. Whereas Georgie had, in truth, gone up to her own little bedroom to think about her lover, and to give herself up to delicious recollections of his words and his kisses.

Such a strange little maiden's bower it was! A long, low, half-furnished-looking room, only partially carpeted with strips of drugget, with a small camp bedstead at one end, and a chest of drawers and a washhand-stand at the other, and a rickety table and a few dilapidated wooden chairs about in the middle. Over the chimney-piece was a large-sized photograph, in an Oxford frame, of her father in full hunting gear, mounted on his favorite horse Sunbeam; flanked on either side by two smaller pictures, representing severally Ricketts the huntsman holding her own chestnut horse, and old Mike the earth-stopper hugging a favorite fox-terrier. Mike had grinned broadly at the critical moment when he shouldn't have grinned, and had come out with his mouth stretched from ear to ear, and no nose at all to speak of; and the terrier, having incontinently wagged his tail, was permanently represented as owning two.

Above these specimens of art were palled up a couple of horseshoes, a minia ure spur, supposed to fit on to Georgie's own small heel, and a large collection of riding-whips. On the wall, over the chest of drawers, was carefully nailed a piece of crimson silk on which were hung in a row five brushes, surmounted by a stuffed fox's head. These were Georgie's greatest treasures, being all, as she would tell you with pride, her own "earnings" on those red letter days of her life when she had been the only lady "in at the death."

Into this retreat Georgie came after the storm at lunch, hoping for a little peace which she was not long destined to enjoy. A tap at the door, and enter Cis, full of troubles and misery, which, flinging himself down on the only sound chair in the room, he proceeded to pour forth.

Why was his father so hard on him? could

he help his constitution? Why was he to be forever sneered at and pitched into before every one? "Only this morning, Georgie, he spoke almost kindly—he wants me to marry Juliet."

"Well, and you want to marry Juliet yourself, don't you?" said Georgie, who was well aware of her brother's passion. She had seated herself on the table, dangling her feet backwards and forwards in a manner that much endangered her stability on that ancient piece of furniture. "It is easy enough to please papa in that, Cis—isn't it?"

"But Juliet is so cold to me. You know I went to see her yesterday; she didn't seem one bit glad to see me; and she has a way of overlooking one, as if one was nobody. Do you know, all she found to say to me, after I had been there nearly ten minutes, was something about my whiskers?"

Georgie laughed merrily. "She was clever to find anything to say of them. I shouldn't have thought them big enough to be worth mentioning! but then I'm your sister. Don't despair, Cis—don't be shy and timid with her; I am sure she is fond of you; and you know she has always been brought up to think of you as her lover. Her father wished it and your father wishes it. I am sure I think your path is a pretty easy one, with everybody to make it smooth, and to clear away difficulties for you—heigho!" And poor Georgie gave a rueful sigh at the thought of her own very hopeless-looking little history.

Cis, when he found any one to listen to him, could talk about Juliet by the hour; he straightway went off into a rhapsody about her—about her beauty, her talent, her singing, and her charms of every kind, which Georgie, although she admired and liked Juliet excessively, found after a time somewhat wearisome.

Where is the woman who can listen for long to the tale of the charms of another of her sex, without feeling bored?

When Cis came to offering to fetch his last poetical effusion in praise of his divinity in order that Georgie might fully enter into his feelings, she found she could stand it no longer, and laughingly pushed him out of the room by the shoulders.

"If you come to poetry, my reason will go, you love-sick swain. You'd better not show me any poems, or I shall take them straight down to amuse papa!" at which

awful threat Cis vanished, and it is needless to say did not return with any poetry.

## CHAPTER V.

### JULIET MAKES A DISCOVERY.

THE days at Sotherne Court slipped away swiftly and peacefully. Mr. Bruce had left; there was no longer any reason for his remaining; the business which had brought him down was concluded, and he had other work in town to attend to. But Colonel Fleming still lingered; the weather was fine and the shooting was good, and no one said a word about his leaving; he had nowhere else particularly to go, so he stopped on.

Mrs. Blair never came down stairs before luncheon time—there were, in truth, mysterious rites of the toilet to be gone through which took many hours' labor, and which probably accounted better for her late appearance than the shattered nerves which she pleaded as her excuse.

Juliet and her guardian got into the way of spending these long morning hours together. One day he had found her by herself, writing in the breakfast room.

"Why not bring all that into the library and keep me company, Juliet?"

"Shall I not be in your way?" she asked, with a little hesitation.

"In my way? no, of course not! It is very unsociable of you to shut yourself up alone."

After that she sat in the library every morning with him. They did not talk much. Colonel Fleming either read the papers or wrote his Indian letters, or else he made a pretence of looking over some of the Sotherne estate deeds, a perfectly unnecessary proceeding, of which he himself was half ashamed. Juliet, too, wrote her letters or did her house accounts, or touched up her water-color drawings.

One sat at one end of the table and one at the other. Williams, the bailiff and land agent, came in on business, then the coachman and gamekeeper for orders, or Mrs. Pearce, the housekeeper, knocked at the door with a "might she speak to Miss Blair for one minute?" so that it was by no means an uninterrupted *tete-a-tete* that our two friends enjoyed. Still of course there were some mornings when no one disturbed them for several hours, and there is no denying that they found these mornings particularly delightful.

In the afternoons everything was altered. Mrs. Blair was down stairs; Cecil Travers dropped in to lunch two days out of three, Colonel Fleming went out shooting, and Juliet drove, or rode, or walked, or stayed at home and received visitors, as she had always been accustomed to do before her guardian's arrival.

"That young Travers comes here very often!" remarked Colonel Fleming, one morning, breaking a long silence in which nothing had been audible but the scratch-scratching of two pens hard at work.

"Yes, he comes often," answered Juliet, with a smile, not looking up from her writing.

"He seems rather a muff," continued Colonel Fleming, disparagingly.

"O, not at all; you are quite mistaken!" she said, eagerly. "He is very delicate, poor boy, but he is really clever; he did so well at college, and he reads a great deal, and is very well informed; but he is not at all appreciated in his home, poor Cis, because Mr. Travers thinks nothing of any one who can't ride well, and it's so unfortunate for Cis that he is so timid constitutionally. He really *cannot* manage a horse in the least; and if he went at a fence I believe he would tumble off. He is very painfully conscious of it himself, poor fellow. I always feel sorry for him, because he is so snubbed at home."

"At all events he is appreciated here," said Hugh, who had listened to her eager defence with a meaning smile.

Juliet blushed a little. No woman likes her suitor, be his suit ever so little favored by herself, to be called a muff.

"You are fond of him, Juliet?" continued her guardian, with his head thrown back in his chair, and looking at her mischievously through half-closed eyes; he could read her thoughts as if she had spoken them.

"I have known him all my life," answered Juliet, evasively. "I am used to him—why do you ask me?"

"Never mind why; the subject has an interest for me."

She raised her eyes for one moment and met his. Ah, what a volume is sometimes written in one look!

It was but the work of a second, and then Colonel Fleming mercifully and humanely put up the "Times" between himself and his ward that he might not see the

glowing face of the girl as she bent it quickly down over her writing.

How her heart was beating! surely he would hear it, she thought in dismay; for in that one moment Juliet Blair had learned her own secret!

Half with terror, half with a delicious joy, she had discovered that her heart was gone! I suppose no woman makes that discovery for the first time without a spasm of absolute fear. Where will it lead her to, this new all-absorbing tyrant that has invaded her existence—what will be the end of it?

Juliet ordered her horse and took a long solitary ride that afternoon, that she might think it all out and fairly realize this new thing that had come to her.

To a woman of weaker feelings and narrower mind, to be loved is generally more important than to love. Flattered vanity, gratified self-esteem, the natural pleasure that every woman has in taking the upper hand of the other sex, all these mingled feelings come in and help to make up what most women honestly believe to be love. In nine out of ten so-called love-matches, the love is all on the man's side, and the pleasure of being loved only the woman's.

For Juliet Blair this was not so; she loved the man of herself, not because he loved her; indeed she did not know, and hardly troubled herself to think in those first moments, whether he did love her at all. With all the depth and intensity of a nature that was at once passionate and devoted, impulsive and steadfast, she felt that she had learned to love this man with the whole strength of her being. All her life long others had worshipped and adored her; she had been queen and they her slaves; but this man was her master; without him her life had been an incomplete thing. With him her whole existence took a new meaning. Henceforth there was but one man on earth for her; one who could stir her pulses or dominate her life, whose voice could thrill through her heart, or whose presence could fill her soul with a joy that those alone who have loved with a passion can understand.

And the man was Hugh Fleming. Not Cecil, the gentle, sensitive, affectionate boy who had adored her for years, who was her equal in years and position, whom all her friends had wished her to love and whom her dead father had chosen for her husband;

not him, but the man who but a month ago had been utterly unknown to her, whose years doubled her own, whose life was half spent and whose youth was over; the man who was to have been her guardian and her adviser, who was to have guided her in her choice of a husband, and to have stood in her father's place at the wedding, and whom certainly that father had never for one moment contemplated in the light of her possible lover!

There was no shame in her heart that she had given her love unasked. It did not in those first moments trouble her whether or not it was likely to be returned. She was proud of it, proud of herself for loving him; for was he not worthy to be loved? was he not everything that a woman could most desire to possess? Strong in mind and body, was he not a man to whom she could turn instinctively for help and support? whose judgment must be unerring, whose word must be her law?

But by-and-by, as she rode slowly down a narrow lane, flicking the dying hedgerows idly with her whip, other thoughts began to stir her heart—there came to her a recollection of that "past" in his life to which he had more than once alluded. Some love, as she had guessed, had once filled his life and was dead and gone, leaving behind a void and a blank in his heart; could that void never be filled up? had that past love been so powerful and intense, even such as she felt now in herself, that it could never be renewed? Would Hugh Fleming never love again? Who is it who talks about first love? is it true that a man who has once loved can never love again, in the same way?

And at these questions that she asked herself, the flush of excitement faded slowly from Juliet's cheek, and her face grew weary and sad.

All at once the landscape looked gray and dreary, the sunshine seemed to have faded, the trees with their falling leaves looked gaunt and cheerless; for the first time, she noticed the white mist creeping up from the valley towards her. With a little shiver she turned her horse's head quickly and rode homewards.

In the hall at Sotherne, Cis Travers came eagerly forward to meet her.

"O, here you are! I have been waiting for you. How long you have been out, Juliet; how white you are! You should not ride so far; you look tired out," he said,

following her with eager solicitude towards the staircase.

"Let me alone," said Juliet, crossly; "don't you suppose that I am old enough to take care of myself!"

An impulsive nature has always its weaknesses; Juliet at that moment felt a positive dislike to the boy and his tender anxiety. The young fellow drew back abashed and repulsed by her fretful words.

Eventually she repented of her unkindness to him and asked him to stay to dinner, an invitation which Cis eagerly availed himself of.

Nothing had occurred that need have altered her manner to her guardian, and yet she felt, when they met in the evening, that she could not speak naturally to him; she was thankful for the presence of Cis Travers, and addressed herself almost exclusively to him all dinner time. She talked more than was usual to her, asking him numberless questions about himself and his interests, and reviving all sorts of half-playful, half-affectionate reminiscences concerning little incidents of their childish days. Cis had never seen her so gracious and so encouraging to him. His spirits rose, he became excited and animated, till Juliet, who had never before taken such pains to draw him out, was surprised to find how pleasantly he could talk.

Colonel Fleming could not quite make her out; he thought he was being punished for having called Cis a muff, and revenged himself by being particularly agreeable to Mrs. Blair.

That lady was not slow to appreciate his attentions. She always laid herself out to fascinate him, but seldom met with such success as on this evening.

"It is all this scarf *a la Pompadour*, with the *marquise* cap," she said to herself; "I knew it suited me to perfection, in spite of that little fool Ernestine." Ernestine was Mrs. Blair's French maid.

Whereas, Colonel Fleming could hardly have told you at the end of the evening whether his fair charmer wore black or white, velvet or brown holland!

She was full of mysterious nods and winks, and little jerks of the head in the direction of the two young people.

"How well they get on!" she whispered, behind her fan; "it will be all settled in a few days, you will see—don't they look happy together!"

"Let me give you a little more chicken?" said Colonel Fleming, ignoring entirely, with a brutal indifference, the happiness of the young couple.

"Not any, thanks. Aha! always so hard-hearted to a love affair, you naughty *cruel* man!" laughed the widow, softly. "Ah! If I could only give you a little of my *exquisite* sympathy in matters of the heart—I who have too much sensitiveness. My beloved husband used always to blame me for it. 'My darling Maria,' he used frequently to say to me, 'try and control yourself; you wear yourself out with so much sensibility; and that is my defect. I am quite conscious of it,' she added, with a pretty sorrowful little sigh.

"Sense and sensibility," said Hugh, gallantly, with a touch of unperceived sarcasm; "they generally go together!"

"Flatterer!" answered the lady, tapping his hand gently with her ever-ready fan. At which Juliet stopped short in the middle of what she was saying and stared at her, and then got very red and went on talking again.

Everybody was at odds that evening.

It is to be hoped that Mrs. Blair and Cis enjoyed themselves, for certainly the other two did not.

But after a night spent in sleeplessly tossing up and down upon her bed, in self-torturings and self-scoldings, Juliet rose in the morning in a more reasonable frame of mind.

It was a hopelessly wet day, wet and windy, with the leaves coming down off the trees in showers; a day that made Squire Travers rub his hands gleefully together as he drew aside his blind and looked out of the window. "That's the sort; soon bring the leaves all off the hedges at this rate!" he muttered, hopefully, to himself.

But Miss Blair, who was not so keen about hunting as her neighbor, and loved each season's pleasure in their turn, was sorry to see the last of her roses and scarlet geraniums lying all dashed and dragged on the sopping lawn. The whole valley was filled with a misty drizzle, and the west wind howled in a melancholy way among the tall chimneys of the old house.

Juliet met her guardian at breakfast with pitiful bemoanings over this dismal change in the weather. Let us be thankful that we are born under showery skies and changing winds, and that Providence has bestowed

upon us a gift so appropriate to our needs as an ever-varying climate! Let us be thankful, we that are blessed with neither the ease of manner nor the fluent tongue of our French neighbors—that are, on the contrary, awkward, silent, and self-conscious under trying circumstances—let us be thankful, I say, for the ever-ready subject of conversation which has been mercifully meted out to us to compensate in some measure for these defects.

O, much abused, much belied climate of the British Isles, damp, rheumatic, neuralgic, unwholesome though you be—we owe you at least this, that you cover our mistakes, veil our confusions, screen our awkwardnesses, and provide for us, one and all, an easy and convenient channel whereby we may escape unscathed in the emotional moments of our lives!

Juliet was very thankful to the driving rain and lowering skies that day at breakfast. The morning papers did the rest, and took away from the awkwardness of a *tete-a-tete* which she had never found oppressive before.

And yet—when she had gone about her household duties, and scolded the cook, and consulted with the housekeeper, and made sundry insinuating suggestions to old Higgs the butler, who always called her "Miss Juliet," and treated her with a fatherly patronage as if the cellar was his personal property, out of which in consideration for her sex and general weakness he kindly allowed her to have a few bottles of wine—and yet, after these ordinary daily duties were completed, Juliet, with that perversity which is essentially a feminine peculiarity, went of her own accord into the library.

She was unreasonably disappointed and mortified to find the room empty, and sat down to her writing in the most aggrieved frame of mind. After a few minutes, however, Colonel Fleming came in; he had a large portfolio under his arm, which he proceeded to deposit in front of her. "I promised to show you my sketches some day, Juliet; as it is a wet morning, suppose we look over them now."

The girl was delighted, and soon got over her nervous self-consciousness in the pleasure of turning over the drawings and listening to his animated descriptions of the scenes and subjects they represented.

There were Indian temples and palaces,

views on the Ganges, views of the Himalayas, spirited little subjects descriptive of pig-sticking and tiger hunts, all set in a gorgeous flare of Eastern coloring; side by side with tamer bits of woodland or seacoast, or dreamy distant views over English hedges and under English skies.

Juliet was enchanted with all she saw; she had an artistic eye herself, and keenly appreciated the bold hand and correct coloring displayed in the sketches in Hugh Fleming's portfolio, indicating, as they did, no mean capacity for art.

She had looked them carefully all through, and was standing at the table replacing the drawings into the book, when there fluttered out from among them a small colored crayon sketch which she had not noticed before, and which fell at her feet under the table.

Juliet stooped to pick it up. It was the head of a woman, a young girl, apparently about seventeen, fair and delicate looking, with flaxen hair falling in curls on either side of her face in an old-fashioned way, and with large blue eyes and a gentle timid-looking mouth. Underneath the sketch, in Hugh's bold large handwriting, which Juliet had no difficulty in recognizing, was written "June 16, 1849. — My darling Annie."

With an exclamation, Colonel Fleming attempted to take the little sketch from her hand. Juliet turned upon him speechless, but with crimson cheeks and blazing eyes, and in another instant the pale tinted face was torn right across, and the two pieces fell fluttering on to the ground between them.

It was all the work of one minute, and in the next, Juliet, in an agony of shame and contrition, had burst into a passion of angry tears. Hugh Fleming turned first very white and then very red. He stooped down and picked up the damaged sketch.

"How could you be so careless, Juliet?" he said, trying to steady his voice, which trembled with some suppressed emotion; "how stupid of you to tear this little old sketch! I did not know I had it still; don't cry, my dear child, it doesn't much signify; of course it was an accident—every one has accidents occasionally. I am sure you will put the pieces together as well as you can for me, won't you?" And he thrust the drawing into her hand.

"Mr. Travers wishes to speak to you in

the morning-room, please, miss," here broke in *Higgs* the butler, opening the door.

Juliet jumped up, hastily brushed away her tears, and, murmuring something indistinct about being sorry for her stupidity, she hurriedly left the room, carrying away the torn fragments of the crayon sketch in her hand.

## CHAPTER VI.

### ERNESTINE LOOKS FOR A FAN.

CECIL TRAVERS was kept waiting fully a quarter of an hour for Miss Blair in the morning-room. Emboldened by her manner to him on the previous evening, the unlucky youth had decided on coming over the first thing in the morning, to place his fate once more in her hands.

He could not, as it happens, have chosen a more inopportune moment.

Juliet came into the room with a thunder cloud on her face. My heroine was not, as it will be noticed, blessed with an angelic temper.

"What is it you want, Cis?" she said, as she entered the room; and certainly no more unpromising foundation whereupon to construct a declaration of love was ever presented to an unfortunate young man.

"I came—I came—O Juliet!" taking hold of both her hands; "you know very well what I have come for. You were so good to me last night, and so kind and nice that I thought—I thought—"

"You thought you would make an idiot of yourself once more; is that it, Cis?"

"O Juliet, I do so love you! Don't you think you could like me a little? don't you think you are fonder of me than you used to be?"

"My dear Cis, I thought we had talked all this over before," said Juliet, sitting down and resigning herself to her fate. "I have told you over and over again that, though I am fond of you as an old friend, you really must not expect anything more from me. Why don't you try and put the idea out of your head?"

The boy stood silent before her with a downcast face and the tears slowly welling up into his blue eyes.

"Come, come, Cis," said Juliet, touched by the sight of his sorrow and putting out her hand kindly towards him. "Come, be a man; look at it in its proper light. I



don't love you in that way, Cis, and I never shall, never! We should not be in the least suited to each other. Though you are two years older than I am, yet I am years older in life than you. You would go your way and I mine. We should never be happy together. And, besides, I don't love you as your wife should love you. Cis, my poor old boy, don't look so unhappy; there are plenty more women in the world, far better than I am, who will be fond of you some day."

"O, don't talk to me of other women, I can't bear it!" groaned Cis, turning away from her to hide his face of misery. "Don't take away hope, Juliet; tell me to wait. I have been too quick again, I haven't given you time enough. I will go away again and wait—years—any time you like; only, for Heaven's sake, don't say you won't let me come here and see you as usual!"

"Of course, Cis, come here as usual—why, after knowing you all my life, how could I say otherwise! But indeed, indeed, I don't think I must let you hope anything else. I will be your friend all my life, Cis, but don't ask me for anything more."

Poor Cis was fairly sobbing; he leant his head down on the table and gave free vent to his misery, whilst Juliet, with those half measures that women so selfishly delight in, thought to console him by standing over him, stroking his hands, and pushing back his fair hair from his forehead; she even stooped down and gave him a gentle kiss, murmuring the most affectionate and tender words into his ear—proceedings which filled the unhappy Cis with a mixture of ecstasy and wretchedness that sent him almost beside himself.

When, however, wound up to a pitch of absolute despair by her kindness, Cis went down on his knees before her, clung to her hands with passionate kisses, and entreated her to relent and promise to marry him, Juliet, after the manner of her capricious sex, drew back, spoke to him shortly and sternly, told him to get up and not make a fool of himself, and used other such unpalatable but wholesome words as quickly brought the young gentleman to his senses.

"It is time you went, Cis; I don't want a scene, and I can say nothing more to you; take my advice—go away from home for a little while, and then, when you are more sensible and can look at things in a brighter light, come back and see me again."

"Yes, I will do everything you think best; I will go away, and I won't bother you again—at least not yet; but I shall love you all my life, Juliet. I don't think I am such a boy as you think; as all events, it is no boy's love that I feel. I shall never marry any one else but you, and if you won't have me for a husband I will stand by you as your friend and your brother till I die!" So very crestfallen, but not altogether ingloriously, Cis Travers took his departure.

"Wasn't Cis Travers here this morning?" asked Mrs. Blair, of her stepdaughter, as they sat together over their fancy work that afternoon.

"Yes, he was," answered Juliet, rather shortly.

"I hope you haven't refused him again, Juliet," said the widow, inquiringly, looking closely at her.

"What if I had! I don't know that I need confide Cis's love affairs to any one, Mrs. Blair," said the girl, resentfully; for to bully her about Cis was one of Mrs. Blair's favorite amusements.

"Juliet, I hope you haven't sent that poor young man quite away; I hope you have given him a little encouragement."

"What does it matter?" said Juliet, jumping up and scattering her fancy work on to the carpet. "When I am engaged to be married, I will let you know at once, Mrs. Blair, you may be quite sure of that!" This was added defiantly, with distinct allusion to the fact, which was tacitly understood between them, that, when she married, Mrs. Blair would probably have to seek other quarters.

Juliet gathered up her tumbled worsteds and silks and left the room with a little short laugh, which, had she seen the malignant glance which her stepmother cast after her, would probably have been less triumphant.

Mademoiselle Ernestine, Mrs. Blair's French maid, was a young woman of varied accomplishments and great discretion of character.

Not only was she a consummate *artiste* in all the intricacies of dress and fashion, in all the mysterious and varied methods of adorning the hair, and in still more mysterious processes of beautifying the human countenance, into which it does not become you and me, O my reader, to pry too closely! but also was this young person an as-

tute observer of life and character. She knew when to speak and what to say, and she knew also—O, rare and wonderful talent in a woman!—she knew when to hold her tongue.

That same evening, whilst Ernestine was brushing out those mysterious plaits and bows of Mrs. Blair's fair hair, of which no mortal being save those two could entirely guess the wondrous construction, the lady observed carelessly:

"Miss Blair cannot go much out into the garden in the morning this weather, can she, Ernestine?"

"O no, madame! What a privation for mademoiselle! she so fond of flowers!"

"And it must be dull for her in the morning-room all by herself, mustn't it?" continued the widow.

"Ah, oui, madame, *cette pauvre chère demoiselle!* it must be *triste à faire peur*; it is certainly no wonder that mademoiselle should refugiate herself in the librairie with Monsieur le Colonel who is so silent and quiet, not a companion so cheerful as a lady would be for her, *pauvre demoiselle.*"

"Thanks, that will do for to-night, Ernestine; bring me my slippers and my book of Meditations. I don't want you any more. Good-night." And the waiting-maid was dismissed.

The next morning, when Ernestine brought in her mistress's cup of chocolate, the lady said to her as she drew aside the bed-curtain and placed the dainty little china tray beside her:

"Go down into the library, Ernestine, and look for my fan; I think I left it there last night."

The fan lay conspicuously on the dressing-table; but Ernestine, who could be dumb, or deaf, or blind as occasion demanded, answered demurely:

"Oui, madame;" and departed.

In the course of five minutes she returned.

"I cannot find it anywhere, madame, and ah, *tiens*, there it is! *Dieu, que je suis bête!* and I who searched everywhere under all the tables, and monsieur himself was so good as to help me to look; but mademoiselle said she felt sure you had taken it up stairs with you." Having thus imparted the information which she knew was required, Mademoiselle Ernestine busied herself about the room.

"Ernestine," said Mrs. Blair, after a few minutes, "I feel so fresh and well this

morning, I think if you will bring me my bath I will get up at once; it is a nice morning, isn't it?"

It was a gusty showery day, hardly finer than its predecessor; but Ernestine replied with alacrity that it was "*adorablement beau*," and Mrs. Blair proceeded to get up.

Down stairs Juliet was standing timidly at the back of Colonel Fleming's chair holding in her hand the torn sketch very carefully pasted on to a piece of cardboard, so that the rent was almost invisible. "I—I have mended it as well as I could," she was saying, with a crimson face and trembling voice.

Colonel Fleming waited for half a minute before laying down his pen and turning towards her, possibly in order to give her time to control herself.

"You have mended what? O, ah, the little sketch?" he said, not looking up at her; "that is very kind of you; there was no hurry about it. It is a pretty face, is it not? Would you like me to tell you the story of that poor girl, Juliet? I think you would be sorry for her; sit down here," wheeling an armchair in front of the fire for her; "there, are you comfortable? let me give you a footstool; and now I will tell you about her." Juliet sat as she was told and looked away from him into the fire.

"Every one, I suppose, has some romance, either sad or sweet, in their past lives, and Annie Chalmers is mine," he began, not looking at her, whilst Juliet's heart beat fast and painfully.

"It was years and years ago, almost before you were born, that I first met her. She was the sweetest, gentlest, most innocent little soul that God ever created. She lived alone with her father in a tiny house just on the outskirts of a great deep wood. I was in the —th then, and we were quartered in the neighboring dead-alive little cathedral town. Perhaps at first it was only for want of something better to do, but at all events I got into the habit of walking out to their cottage on summer evenings. I used to stroll over there in the dusk, and her father and I would sit outside in the garden smoking our pipes by the open window, and she used to sit inside in the darkness singing to us all sorts of quaint old-fashioned songs in her sweet pure voice; and then, when I went away she would walk out to the end of the garden with me and stand and talk to me at the gate before

I left. One night we were standing there together under the honeysuckle archway; there were all sorts of sweet smells in the air from the midsummer flowers about us, and the moonshine was gleaming white and still over the lawn, and through the dark trunks of the trees in the wood beyond; presently, I recollect, a soft white owl flew by us with a little cry that made her start and cling to my hand. It was all so silent that we could hear the brook tinkling over the stones at the bottom of the field; and we ourselves ceased talking, to listen to the still voices of the night; and then I do not know how it all came about, or why I did it, but suddenly I took my darling into my arms all in the silver midsummer's moonlight and told her that I loved her, and found out from the fluttering of her heart that she too loved me.

"Well, it was of course the most foolish and imprudent engagement that two young things ever entered into. I had nothing but my pay in those days, and she was absolutely penniless. Her father stormed and swore at me a bit at first; but after a day or two, when Annie had hung on his neck, and wept, and prayed, and entreated, he had no longer the heart to refuse her anything. He found out, Heaven knows by what pinching, and saving, and selling out of his slender capital, that he could give her a thousand pounds, and for the rest we must live on my pay, and trust, as so many do, to luck or chance, to rub along through life as best we could.

"Annie, dear little soul, had no fears. What were butchers' and bakers' bills to her! Such sordid vulgar cares never troubled her; her home had been certainly a modest one, but still she had never been brought face to face with dunning tradesmen or pinching penury. She had beautiful high-flown poetical ideas about the delight of starving with me on a crust of bread, and giving up everything else on earth for love—words of which, poor child, she had not in fact the faintest comprehension; she used to trip along by my side with her hands twisted over my arm, solemnly going over in one moment all she would do, and bear, and suffer for my sake, in a way that when I gazed down at her little fragile figure, that looked as if the first rough wind must blow her away, made my heart sink with dismay; and then in the next moment she would be prattling like a child of the home

we should have together, all filled with fresh flowers, and bright-colored chintzes, and pink and white muslin, till I could not help smiling at her simplicity and utter ignorance of the harsh unlovely world I was going to take her into."

It will surprise no one to learn that at this juncture Miss Blair mentally ejaculated "Little fool!"

"Well," continued Hugh Fleming, after a moment's pause, "well, after we had been engaged about six weeks, orders came for my regiment to go to India. That was a dreadful blow for the old man; if he had known it at the first, I doubt if he would ever have consented to our engagement; but it was too late now. Annie said her heart would break if she was not allowed to go out with me; her father could not help himself, he was obliged to hide his own suffering and to let her go.

"Of course the result of the change in my prospects was that we must be married at once. We had to start in a month, and there was barely time to get ready her outfit and to make all arrangements for our wedding, so as to allow us a clear week in England before embarking at Southampton.

"Privately, Annie and I thought the Horse Guards had played into our hands in the most delightful and exemplary manner in the world! Instead of being doomed to the tedium of a long and uncertain engagement, here we were forced, as it were, into immediate matrimony by circumstances over which we had no control whatever. We were careful, however, not to hurt the old man's feelings by any unseemly display of this very selfish glee.

"I can hardly remember all that happened during those last three weeks. I know we were both very busy; she went up to London for two days to stay with an aunt who was to help her to get her things, and I, too, was obliged to run up to town two or three times. What with extra regimental duties consequent on such a sudden start, looking after the men's outfits and my own, and what with having to go, again and again, to the lawyers to see about the settlement of her thousand pounds—and lawyers can take as much time over one thousand pounds as they can over sixty—you may fancy that I had plenty of business on my hands, and had not much spare time left for anything. In truth, I saw very little of Annie just then—a fact which has

since caused me endless and most painful self-reproaches.

"I was continually thinking that as I was so soon to have her all to myself it did not so much matter that so many days slipped by without my seeing her at all. Alas! if I had but known!

"At last everything was settled, and Jim Lester, our major, was to be my best man. He is dead now, poor fellow; he was killed at Lucknow. Such a tall handsome man he was—he always did best man to all the young fellows in the regiment who made fools of themselves, as he would say, and then stood godfather to their first babies. He was so accustomed to it, he used to say, that he could do either office in his sleep; his only fear being that he might some day forget at which ceremony he was assisting and interpolate sponsorial answers into the solemnization of holy matrimony. Indeed, there was a story currently reported and universally believed in, that being best man on one occasion to a certain Captain Gordon, who was fortunate enough to win the hand of a very pretty heiress much run after by all the unmarried officers in the—th, the parson having duly asked 'Wilt thou take this woman to be thy wedded wife,' etc., Jim Lester, in a loud and fervent voice, audible all over the church, made response, 'That is my desire;' which so took away the bridegroom's breath that he was completely placed *hors de combat*, and never answered 'I will' at all; so that the clergyman had to proceed rapidly to the next paragraph in the service in order to cover his hopeless confusion, whilst Jim Lester never found out that he had done anything wrong until the time came for kissing the bridesmaids in the vestry.

"Well, the day before the wedding day came, and I went over to the cottage. The peaceful house seemed strange and unlike itself. There was the aunt from London, and two cousins who were to be her bridesmaids, and a clergyman uncle who was to marry us. We had a scramble picnic tea-party in Mr. Chalmers's little smoking-room, as the dining-room, I was told, was laid out for the next day's feast. We were all very merry, but my Annie looked a little pale and worried.

"When I rose to go, she followed me out of the room.

"'Look here,' she said, and turned the key of the dining-room door and made me go

in. 'Isn't it pretty? I have arranged it all myself; it only wants a few more flowers round the cake to be perfect.'

"There was the table all laid out with snowy linen and bright glass, and piles of fruit and pastry in silver dishes, and in the middle the white sugared bridal cake, and over all a perfect flower garden of roses and fuchsias, and great white ascension lilies in scented pyramids.

"'Isn't it lovely? and I have arranged all the flowers myself.'

"'You have tired yourself out, I am afraid, little woman,' I said, drawing her near to me.

"'But isn't it pretty, Hugh?' she asked again.

"And then I praised her handiwork with heaven knows how many foolishly fond lover's words.

"'I must go now,' I said.

"'Then say good-by, Hugh,' she answered, putting up her arms round my neck.

"'Good-night,' I answered.

"'Not good-night! say good-by,' she persisted.

"'Why good-by, Annie? good-night is a more fitting word between us now.'

"'But I should like you to say good-by, best; it is good-by to Annie Chalmers, you know.'

"I have often wondered what made her say this; whether it was a mere chance whim, or whether, indeed, there was some presentiment in her mind of what the morrow was to bring forth. At the time I thought nothing of it; I smiled at her fanciful request, and granted it playfully; and then she came down the garden with me, and stood in the honeysuckle archway after I parted from her, as she had been always accustomed to do. When I reached the corner of the wood I turned to wave my hand to her; there she stood, a slight white motionless figure looking after me in the dusky twilight. I never saw her again alive.

"Early the next morning, half an hour even before the very early hour at which I had ordered my servant to call me, I was awakened by a clattering of horse's hoofs on the stones of the barrack yard outside my window. I don't know why, but there seemed something ominous to me in the sound; there was nothing very unusual in it, and yet somehow I connected it immediately with myself. Five minutes after, Jim Lester came into my room with a face as

scared and white as though he had seen a ghost.

"Something is wrong, Fleming; you must get up at once, and we must go over to the cottage. I have ordered my dogcart; be as quick as you can—and," he added, as he turned away again to the door, "put on your shooting-jacket, old fellow;" and by that I knew that there would be no wedding for me that day!"

"Dear old Jim Lester! who that had known you could say that there are not men in the world as pitiful, as tender-hearted, as full of exquisite tact and perfect sympathy and heaven-born compassion as any woman that ever lived!

"During that two miles' drive to the cottage in Jim's dogcart, we neither of us spoke one single word. I did not dare ask what had happened, or whether he knew. An awful certainty of the truth was upon me, and yet I kept on saying over and over again to myself:

"Of course, it's old Chalmers has had a stroke; of course it's the old man; old men always have strokes and fits."

"Once I think I said it aloud, and then Jim just laid his hand lightly on mine for a minute, as a woman might have done, but he never spoke.

"But when I got there, there was no longer any need for me to ask. A frightened group of women stood in the narrow hall. When I came in at the doorway they made way for me to pass in silence, and I walked straight up stairs.

"On the little landing above, a door opened, and some one said, 'Here he is.'

"And then old Chalmers said, 'O my poor boy!' and took my hand and led me into the room.

"Her room! On a chair was huddled up her wedding finery, her white dress and her veil, and the orange blossoms; the bouquet I had sent her from Covent Garden the day before, lay on the dressing-table. I think I saw them all in that one moment, down to her gloves knocked off the table and lying on the floor beside her little satin slippers. And she—my bride, my darling—lay there on the still warm and ruffled bed, which she had apparently but just left, dead—quite dead!

"It was the doctor behind me who spoke. 'It's heart disease; nothing could have saved her; it must have been the fatigue and excitement that killed her. She could

not have suffered at all; we must be thankful for that.'

"Why was I not sent for?" I said, hoarsely.

"There was no time," said the father; "she was dressing, and felt a little faint; she called her cousin from the next room, and she was so frightened at the look in her face that she called her mother. They had hardly time to fetch me—as I came into the room she died."

"And then I don't know what happened. I think I fell forward on to the bed with an exceeding bitter cry, and everything became darkness around me. Then like a voice out of a fog some one said, 'Take him away, he should not be here, poor fellow! take him out of the room.'

"And it was the aunt, I think, who led me down stairs by the hand, I groping my way down like a blind man.

"Not there, not there, anywhere but there!" I cried, as the poor woman, hardly conscious probably of what she was doing, opened the dining-room door.

"For there I saw again the white table all laid out with the fruits and the bridal cake, and the roses and the white ascension lilies, and seemed to hear again my darling's voice, 'Isn't it pretty, Hugh? say good-by to me, not good-night; say good-by,' as she had said it only last night.

"Ah, God, that was an awful day! to this hour I shudder when I think of it.

"There is not much more to tell you, Juliet. A few days later, and I was standing by her open grave in the little churchyard, through which I had thought she would have passed by my side in all her bridal finery.

"It killed her father; he only survived about a year. I heard afterwards that her mother had died suddenly in the same way; so I suppose she inherited a weak heart from her. I went out to India the following week alone; and except to Jim Lester, from that day to this, Juliet, you are the first person to whom the name of Annie Chalmers has passed my lips."

Colonel Fleming ceased speaking, and for a few minutes there was silence in the room; only the clock ticked on between them, and a blazing coal fell noisily out of the grate into the fender.

Then he got up and came and stood over her. "I have told you my story, Juliet; my life is perhaps over, and yours is only just

beginning—now tell me something; why did you so ruthlessly tear that poor little face in half yesterday?"

"You—you said it was an accident; besides, I did not know," stammered Juliet, crimsoning painfully.

"That is no answer, Juliet—why did you do it?"

He bent down over her and took hold of both her hands, and the lids dropped over her conscious eyes that could not look up to meet his.

"*I will know; why did you do it? child, tell me!*" and there was a tremor of unspoken passion in his voice. "Tell me, darling—why did you?"

"Ah, good-morning, good people!" He dropped Juliet's hands as if they burnt him, and they both started apart guiltily as Mrs. Blair, all radiant in gray cashmere and pink

silk, with a white Shetland shawl becomingly draped over her shoulders, sailed into the room.

"Good-morning, colonel; now, where *can* that black and gold fan of mine be! Ernestine is as blind as a bat, and never can find anything, and I *know* I must have left it here last night; Juliet, love, is it not on that table near you?—no? then where can it be! Ah, here is that silly Ernestine!" and enter that damsel demurely carrying the fan.

"Here is the fan, madam; I have found him on your table of toilet under the sachet."

How both these consummate actresses managed to keep their countenances to each other during this playing out of their little parts was certainly almost miraculous.

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

# "TRIFLES LIGHT AS AIR."

BY KATE PUTNAM.

LIEUT. FREDERIC EGERTON, U. S. N., was twenty-five, unmarried and handsome. Of his friend and fellow-officer, Raymond Carr, likewise Lieutenant U. S. N., may safely be affirmed the same proposition, with a slight variation of the last clause. For whereas *Monsieur* Frederic was of the dark and swarthy order, with keen black eyes, black hair and thick mustache, both soldierly and becoming, hued like the raven, or that less poetical bird the crow, Raymond rejoiced in the possession of a blonde physique, from whose almost girlish softness of complexion no shadow upon the smoothly shaven lip detracted. Yet those who put too rash a faith in physiognomy might discover, too late, that this fair exterior was not the visible sign of a yielding feminine nature. The innocence of the large blue eyes could freeze to a dangerous steely glitter; the laughing lip compress, and the clear forehead harden into deep lines of passion. For, like a majority of this peculiarly Saxon type, once fully aroused, his anger had a bitter, fell intensity, the more startling from its sharp contrast to his usual mood of careless gayety. Very seldom, however, was he thus excited; rather did it seem his vocation to try the temper of others. Mirth and malice arched his brow, and curled his mouth, whose particularly demure expression was wont to forebode some outrageous attack upon Egerton's hot disposition. The latter, nevertheless, was very fond of his tormentor's society, and, in spite of an occasional fiery word, the two were inseparable.

Yet not quite that, for, from their conversation as they strolled together up Broadway, it appeared that, on the previous morning, Lieutenant Fred had indulged himself in a single-handed jostle with the crowds sweeping along the pavements. Also, it would seem, he had managed to fall in love, during the course of his wandering. This fact was indicated by his reply to Ray's commendation of an *espiegle* brunette face flashing past amid the throng.

"*That?* I only wish you could see a girl I met yesterday! By Jove!"

"Pretty, was she?" asked the other, carelessly.

"Pretty! I never saw such a beauty in my life—"

"There, there, dear!" began Ray, soothingly patting him upon the shoulder, after the most approved old-lady model. "Now don't go for to get excited; for what says Dr. Watts's sweet little hymn—"Children, you should never let your angry passions rise—"

"Bother you, Ray!" interrupted Egerton, angrily jerking away his arm; "leave me alone, will you?"

"So it wandered off, on its first visit to New York, did it, and fell in love with a lovely little fish-woman—"

"It doesn't become *you* to say so, at any rate," broke in the other, now thoroughly provoked—"for she looked like you."

"Like me, did she?" laughed Ray. "That alters the case, naturally."

"Why, of course I don't mean that she wasn't a great deal better looking, but somehow she reminded me of you."

Ray fairly shouted at the straightforward earnest unconsciousness of this speech.

"I'm much obliged to you, I'm sure," he said—"but I don't quite trust your taste."

"You would, though, if you could see her. I turned square round, and followed sail for about a mile, and then lost her in—Jupiter! there she is now!"

"Where? Hallo! Belle, who'd have thought of seeing *you* here?"

"Who wouldn't, that has so often walked here with me! But who would have thought to see *you*, without a word of warning! Why couldn't you have come to us, at once?"

"Because I've been here less than two days, and, though it may not be polite to say so, I have certain other things to think of beside you, Miss Belle! O, by the way, let me introduce to your favorable notice Lieutenant Egerton, a simple sailor just come to town, and out to see the sight. Fred, this is my cousin, Miss Isabella Osborne—one of the sights aforesaid."

"Really, Ray," remonstrated the young

lady, after the proper acknowledgments to her new acquaintance, "your manners are worse every time I see you."

"Glad you're logical enough to put cause and effect together," answered the saucy scamp.

"There is a proof, directly! And how *could* you make people stare, by hailing me as if I were a ship? I had half a mind not to speak to you."

"Had you, truly? Well, you've concealed it so admirably that I've never suspected for a moment that you had even half a one."

"Lieutenant Egerton, is he always like this?" asked Ray's monitor, resigning the attempt in despair, and turning to her silent companion. That worthy young officer, taken unawares, in a long look at the pretty face near him, was too disconcerted to do more than stammer forth a rather unsatisfactory reply.

"O, it's of no use to talk to him. He hasn't his wits about him this morning. You see, being a Child of the Sun from the golden region of California, where they have everything but pretty faces, he is ready to fall in love at short notice. And yesterday he committed the fatal deed, as he has just been telling me. He says the girl is a 'stunner!' Excuse the word—California style."

"Miss Osborne, I hope you will believe that I have said nothing of the kind—Ray, how can you?" in a tone of repressed anger.

"Well, I'll tell you what he did say, Belle—that she looked like me. Come now, didn't you?"

"Yes," was the unhesitating reply—"only a million times handsomer."

"No need for such impolite emphasis; but you see, Belle, I told the truth—"

"I hope you'll survive it, Ray, for it must have been a terrible effort!" put in Belle, saucily.

"All the more credit to me, then. But as I was saying, as we looked something alike, if he hadn't called her better looking than I, I should have thought you were the young lady. But undoubtedly I am much the handsomer of us two."

"In your own opinion!" retorted Belle, half amused, half provoked. "But as your friend was the judge at first, we will leave it to him now. If you please, Lieutenant Egerton, wont my face bear comparison

with my cousin's?" And she turned on him an arch coquettish glance, that swept him quite beyond his depth into a sea of ecstatic bewilderment, wherein he completely forgot all other presence.

"It ought not to be compared to anything but an angel's face!" he cried, fervently, but stopped short at Ray's whistle.

"Whew! That's pretty well for you, Egerton, but I object to your hasty conclusion that I am not an angel. Don't believe a Californian would know one at sight, though."

Miss Osborne had blushed very deeply; not so much, however, at the words, which, in the mouth of many a man, would have been the merest compliment, as at the tone, whose earnest passionate sincerity bore witness to a feeling the furthest possible from flattery. For Ray's sally, coming as it did to effect a diversion, she was very thankful, and would fain have let the awkward subject drop; but, troubled by her silence and heightened color, simple Fred must needs continue:

"I beg your pardon, Miss Osborne; I am afraid I have been very rude. If there was anything I could say or do—"

"O, take it all back again, and say you only meant a quiz!" volunteered Ray, forthwith so tickled at the fancy as to go off in a fit of laughter that from sheer sympathy compelled an answering smile from passers-by.

"Don't, Ray, please!" begged his cousin. "Every one is looking at us."

"Well, my face will bear examination," replied Ray, composedly. "If yours wont, why you should go veiled, my dear." But perceiving her real annoyance, he contrived to sober down his wild spirits.

Miss Belle, having reassured Lieutenant Egerton, presently announced that their paths must diverge, unless they saw fit to accompany her on a round of millinery. As she had anticipated, the idea was flouted by Ray, who promised, however, to pay her a visit in the evening. His companion, too impatient to wait for an invitation and fearful of receiving none, took the matter into his own hands.

"You are not angry with me, are you?" he asked, in a low eager tone, fixing his black eyes with involuntary but rather embarrassing admiration upon her face. "You will let me call on you?"

"Certainly, I shall be happy to receive



"you," she replied, somewhat coldly. Delighted with the permission, but fearful of having offended her, he walked away with a clouded face. Ray watched him a while in silence, then broke forth abruptly:

"You're a precious simpleton, Fred! Why didn't you go down on your knees and ask her to marry you out of hand?"

"What do you mean?" said Egerton, looking up with a hot flush staining his dark face at the sarcastic tone.

"Mean? Why I mean that you have fallen in love, and are foolish enough to show it. Now that's no way at all. Show a girl that you care for her, and she'll snub you; pretend to be indifferent, and the game's in your own hands. Now if you're really in earnest, just play off, and stow your sentiment a while. That's my advice, and worth having, for I know all about these things—though not by experience, thank the ducks!"

What these respectable fowls had to do with keeping him heart-whole Lieutenant Carr did not condescend to explain, nor did Egerton think it necessary to inquire; only drinking in the maxims of this unquestionable authority with an avidity that promised well for their future application. Miss Osborne, on her next meeting, was relieved at the change perceptible in her new acquaintance, for, sufficiently accustomed to admiration and attentions of the ordinary sort, she was quite unprepared for this passionate fervor of feeling that knew but one bound from the heart to the lips. For, strange as it may seem to the cool well-balanced many, poor hot-hearted, hot-headed Fred at first sight had surrendered to a stronger, wilder love than some men feel after months of association; than some, indeed, ever know. Thus had been amply fulfilled Ray's prophecy, uttered, aforetime, in the days of careless freedom, that, if ever Fred Egerton fell in love, he would go off like hot cakes. This he certainly had done, interpreting the metaphor to mean an entire abandonment to the impulse possessing him, between which, and the rules laid down by his mentor, the conflict often was so violent as to make his course extremely difficult. At such times, since he could command his tongue, but not his eyes, he would maintain a silent watch, confusing, indeed, from its peculiar intensity, yet preferable to the extraordinary speeches which would frequently escape his unguarded lips.

Never a recluse, Belle led an uncommonly gay life during the furlough of her cousin, who, with his friend, was constantly tempting her to this excursion or that gayety. At first these parties were delightful to all, but presently they began to be rather a pain than pleasure to one member of the trio—Egerton, who, reasonably or unreasonably, had conceived a violent jealousy of Raymond Carr. As a relative, the latter could claim many privileges denied to another; a fact in itself sufficient to trouble our moody lover, to whom it seemed, moreover, that there was a remarkable readiness both to claim and to yield these privileges, which, in connection with many more

"Trifles light as air,

But, to the jealous, confirmation strong  
As proofs of holy writ,"

could mean only a secret understanding. So, tormenting himself more and more each day, he was able at length to find in every careless look or tone a deeper signification over which to brood until some later chance should give him fresh food for thought. So did matters go on worse and worse, until finally the crisis came in the sudden discovery of Ray with his arm around his cousin's waist, and his lips whispering words beneath which her blushing face wore an expression half shy, half arch, and wholly maddening to the gloomy gaze beholding it. At his entrance Belle had started and freed herself with a guilty haste, blushing yet deeper beneath his eyes. He turned away abruptly, but not too soon to intercept a meaning glance from Ray, as well as the answering conscious smile that just curved the lips of Belle. Without another word or look he rushed away, unable longer to preserve even so slight a self-control.

Hardly aware of his own movements, he wandered restlessly through the streets, torturing himself with a useless review of his own unhappiness; remembering on what a plausible pretence Ray that evening had sent him without to await his coming; questioning once more the events of the last two weeks, and at length recalling the treacherous advice which at the outset his sometime friend had volunteered. So it had all been a game from first to last; friend and sweetheart alike playing him false, and secretly laughing at the poor dupe. He thought of the drooping eyes, the varying

color, the tremulous tone on which he had built hopes and ventures never discouraged by his constant confidant, and, with the recollection of this deliberate perfidy, his hot Southern blood burned hotter yet, and until the fiery passion subsided it was well for Ray to be beyond his reach. But the soft evening air imperceptibly so cooled and sobered him, that finally the flames of his wrath melted down into a resolution to wreak his scorn and anger upon Ray, in an interview which should end everything between them thenceforth, forever.

Returning to his hotel, he awaited impatiently his companion's arrival. The latter came in merrily humming a tune which he discontinued to address the grim figure before him.

"Well, Fred, you rather took French leave of us to-night, eh? I don't know what humble apology the fair Belle will expect."

Egerton was silent. Ray resumed:

"Why did you vanish, though, and where? I went down to —'s and round by —, but none of the fellows had seen you."

"You are too good," said Egerton, shortly, almost afraid to speak lest he should lose his slight hold of self-command. Ray sat down opposite him, and began to drum the half-finished tune upon the table.

"So you are in your tantrums again, old fellow? I thought I'd cured you of those."

"You have cured me of some things beside," answered Egerton, in a suppressed voice. "Faith and friendship among the number."

"Have I? Uncommon good success for what I had no idea of. Cured you of love, too, perhaps?"

Egerton clenched his hand to keep down the rising passion.

"How dare you speak to me of that?" he exclaimed, hoarsely.

"O, I see! you've been at the theatre—that explains your heroics. But I can't quite make out why I shouldn't speak to you of *that*—meaning love, I suppose—considering I was the one to advise you on the subject."

"Yes, I remember your *advice*!" grinding the word out between his set teeth.

"Mighty thankful you seem for it, too! I think I've earned a right to ask how the pretty little game comes on. Who's going to win?"

His listener could not trust his voice to

reply to this cool mockery, and Ray continued:

"I suppose it's only fair to tell you that I'm convinced my cousin's affections are engaged. Won't say to whom, though. Naturally she keeps it rather a secret."

Egerton sprang to his feet, his face flushed, and his black eyes fairly ablaze with a passion now wholly unrestrained.

"Have a care," he gasped, "how you add insult to deliberate treachery—to—to—base—"

He breathed hard and stopped, thought and speech alike swallowed up in a whirlwind of rage. Quite unprepared for such overmastering emotion, Ray all this time had been quizzing his companion; but now marking the flash of the eye, the quiver of the lip, and the excitement manifest in voice and mien, he became conscious of something more serious than ordinary ill-humor. Dropping his mockery, he said kindly:

"What is it, Fred? something has vexed you. If it is anything I have said or done, you know my ways mean nothing. As for that about my cousin—"

But here Egerton interrupted him, starting back from the hand laid upon his shoulder:

"Don't touch me—I tell you it's not safe. And don't speak to me of *her*!"

Ray sat down again, and after a minute spoke calmly and very coldly:

"You need have no fear of my forcing myself upon you in any way, but if you can talk reasonably, perhaps you will be so good as to tell me the meaning of all this?" Then with a softened tone he added, "If I have unconsciously offended you, it seems to me that some explanation is due an old friend."

"Friend!" repeated Egerton. "No friend of mine. I look for something else than meanness and falsehood in my friends, Raymond Carr!"

"That is sufficient. Whatever you may mean, you shall never have occasion to say that twice to me. Neither my friendship nor acquaintance shall trouble you in future."

His voice had not once risen above its ordinary level, but its quality was icy, scornfully bitter, while his pale set face in every deep-graven line revealed the impress of a hard unyielding nature, beside which Egerton's impulses seemed weak and tran-

something in his frozen calm served to chill the passion of the latter, and with some hesitation he addressed Ray, who had risen to go.

"Stop a moment! Will you answer me one question?"

"Demanded in that tone? No. The time is past for giving or receiving explanations. As we could hardly be supposed to derive much pleasure from each other's society, hereafter we will be strangers, as far as possible. I have the honor to wish you a good evening, Lieutenant Egerton."

With these frigid parting courtesies the door closed upon Raymond Carr, leaving poor Fred alone with his own miserable reflections.

These same reflections the sober morning light rendered no less disagreeable. By that time the fire of wrath had burned down to ashes, over whose chilly remains he could only shiver wretchedly, all the more desolate for the remembrance of their former heat. Nor was his mood improved by the recollection that on this morning, of all others, he was expected to play the *ciccone* to Belle Osborne, who, bent on a visit of curiosity to a certain ship, had gladly availed herself of his superior practical knowledge to supply her own nautical deficiencies. His first thought was to renounce all connection with the affair; his second to go through with it, and by his distant indifferent manner deprive the heartless coquette of any anticipated triumph, while teaching her that he understood and despised her double-dealing. Strengthened by the reflection that it would be most ungentlemanly to break an engagement urged by himself, the good resolution prevailed, so far as to cause him to appear at the appointed time.

Miss Belle was not very long in perceiving that there was something out of the way. Naturally, her inquiring mind sought to discover the precise grievance, but these researches were not duly rewarded. Her questions met with short and unsatisfactory replies; her sallies were received with embarrassing gravity; while, to make yet more pleasant, in the face of all this discouragement, she was forced to sustain the burden of the conversation, which, on his part, was conducted in a monosyllabic manner worthy of the old Spartan brevity. In vain she essayed one line and another, in succession.

"Your furlough is but a week longer, now, isn't it?"

"About that."

"I suppose you will hardly be very sorry. Out of service, and among strangers here, you must have found it rather stupid. Confess, now, haven't you?"

"O no."

"As for me, I scarcely know when I have enjoyed myself so much. I shall expect to miss my cousin—and you—considerably, at first."

"Thank you."

"Really, Lieutenant Egerton, you are so odd! I don't believe you understand one half of what I say!"

"I beg your pardon, Miss Osborne."

"But why are you so silent this morning? Does anything trouble you? Are you ill?"

"Ill? O no—that is yes—rather."

"I'm so sorry!"

"You are very kind."

"Wouldn't it be best to return? It is a pity to trouble you—when you are not well, too."

"O no, it's nothing—no trouble. The—salt air does me good."

A fine excuse, indeed, for enjoying her society unrebuked of his own conscience! In despair, Belle presently resigned herself to her taciturn mood, which was seldom interrupted save by some bit of marine intelligence, tendered and accepted with equal and edifying gravity. Finally, in order to end the confusion of an unusually long pause, the young lady observed, sagely:

"These, I know, are the sails, or shrouds, that one is always reading about. But how can they call them by such a dismal name as shroud, when sail is so much nicer?"

Poor Fred must needs laugh at this woe-ful land ignorance of subjects so familiar to his own salt-water apprehension.

"If they *did* call them shrouds, Miss Belle, the boatswain would give them a lesson pretty quick. These, you see, are just the sails—yonder are the shrouds."

And he directed her gaze to the great ropes.

"But I always thought that they were the same," said Belle, laughing, and coloring a little.

"O no." And then, pitiful of so benighted an understanding, he began to instruct her in the mysteries of the ropes and rigging, concluding the lecture rather abruptly, with the remark:

"I should have thought you would know all about it from your cousin?"

"O, my cousin cannot tell me everything."

He has quite enough to do to answer my questions, now," replied Belle, smiling archly up at her companion. For the first time during that whole morning their eyes met fully, and in the glance was something which caused Belle to look down, and made the young man forget his cold reserve.

"I wish I might ask you a question!" he exclaimed, vehemently. "If I only dared!"

Just then, from under her drooping lashes, she saw him start suddenly, and looking up beheld her Cousin Ray at the moment disappearing from view. Surprised at his passing them by without a word, she turned to Egerton, only to be startled by the forcibly repressed passion in his face.

"Lieutenant Egerton," she cried, in alarm—"you may ask whatever you wish, if you will promise in turn to answer me one question?"

"Well?" said he, gloomily, looking away to escape her searching gaze.

"Is there any—any—quarrel between Ray and you? You are to tell me the truth, remember?"

"Yes," he answered, abruptly, too much troubled by her wistful tone to know how to disguise the unpleasant fact.

"O Lieutenant Egerton, is it—"

"One moment, if you please, Miss Osborne. It was to be but one question, and I claim my right, now. Are you to marry Raymond Carr?"

"Marry him? Cousin Ray?" repeated Belle, with eyes widening in utter amazement. "Of course not!"

"You are not deceiving me?" demanded Fred, in a tone of fierce doubt. She drew back coldly.

"I have no answer for such words, sir."

"Forgive me! I hardly know what I say—but—what was he saying to you last night, then?"

The sudden rush of blood that burned in her cheeks confirmed his suspicion, for the moment weakened.

"I thought so," he muttered, with a vehemence that almost frightened her; "you care nothing for me—you make me your sport though I love you—love you as he never could—"

"Will you hear me?" she ventured, feeling that this overmastering excitement must be checked, at all hazards. "I do care for you, far too well to make a sport of you, and if this quarrel is about—if it has anything

to do with me, I beg of you to be friends again with Ray."

"Because you love him!" he insisted, hotly.

"I do not love him—not in that way. Will you—"

"Then why was his arm around you? why did you blush at his whispers? and why did he send me out of the way, and look so at you, when I came back?"

Again the blood ran redly over cheek and brow, as she replied:

"Ray is like a brother to me, and—and—I know you will not ask me any more, when I entreat it as a favor, and assure you that it is not as you think. Now will you please be friends with him?"

"I will, on condition that you prove your assurance of not caring for him, by telling me what he said to make you blush, last evening?"

At this her face grew pale and red by turns.

"You are very hard with me, I think. When you have my assurance, it is not kind, nor—nor courteous to insist upon conditions."

"As you like," he replied, doggedly. It was evident that the demon of jealousy had possessed itself of his spirit too entirely to admit any concession on his part. Belle Osborne, after the first glance at his set face, seemed debating some difficult question with herself. Presently she turned and addressed him, eyes and voice forcibly steadied by some strong resolution.

"Since you leave me no choice, I will do what I can to remove this misunderstanding. Last night we spoke of you—" Here a momentary flush crossed her cheek, but she did not falter, while something in the hard determination of her mouth brought out a deeper likeness to Ray, showing her akin in spirit, also. Meantime, the young man's black eyes were fastened eagerly upon her face, as if to seize any hidden meaning too subtle for words—"Ray spoke of you," she continued—"and told me that he thought you—loved me, and that you were too good to be trifled with, and—"

She had forced herself on bravely, until now, but at this point she stopped abruptly, and averted her face.

"And—what?" he urged, with uncontrollable vehemence. "What did you say?"

She turned toward him suddenly, her cheeks in a flame, but the fire of her eyes

quenched in springing tears, as, in tones of distressed indignation, she said, below her breath:

"You will not ask me more—you shall not! It is unmanly—"

The publicity of the place was a restraint, but he caught her hand close with a passion that meant more than many a caress, all the while murmuring low quick words, incoherent and scarce intelligible to ears unquickened by love. But poor Belle's heart was traitorous, and despite a consciousness that the young man's mingled love and jealousy had made him appear harsh, violent and ungenerous, the little rebel did so clamor for forgiveness and forgetfulness, that the weak mistress was fain to surrender *a discretion*. Her lips answered not, but her eyes met his, with a look that satisfied his eager questionings more fully than were possible to speech.

"And now," she said, after a while, "will you go and make your peace with poor Ray, if you please?"

This request he readily obeyed, promising, moreover, to bring the other back with him, if possible. But when, leaving her, he walked away in search of Ray, he could not but consider that the possibility was hardly a probability, in view of the young man's peculiar nature. Yet, for his own sake no less than Belle's, he persevered in the undertaking.

Ray, not aware of their proposed expedition, had been greatly vexed at the chance that forced upon him a meeting which he had specially desired to avoid, for it was no part of his plan to expose to his cousin a disagreement certain to trouble her to no good end. Therefore, in order to guard against a second encounter, he resolved to stay quietly out of sight until she should have left the ship. Leaning over the side, idly watching the water, he was unconscious of any approach, until, feeling a touch on his shoulder, he turned to behold Frederic Egerton with a countenance wherein shame and embarrassment struggled with an earnest good-will, sufficiently indicating his de-

sire for reconciliation. No such weakness, however, was visible in the face of Ray, who, simply withdrawing from the outstretched hand, looking full into the eyes of the other, awaited his speech in calm cold silence. This naturally had the effect of disconcerting poor Fred, who, after a vain search for the proper form of apology, finally broke forth in this wise:

"Ray, I know I was a fool and worse, last night, and I've come to ask your pardon for my villanous behaviour to you. Ask anything of me and call me all the hard names you like, only don't remember against me something I'm so heartily sorry for."

He stopped, willing to say anything, but hardly knowing what to say, and looked imploringly in Ray's face, which had gradually changed during this appeal. Egerton's unaffected humility and brave acknowledgment of wrong had strongly seconded the relents of friendship, yet, with all this, it is doubtful if the latter's impulsive and fiery spirit had ever known a conflict as severe as that which it cost Raymond Carr's steely nature to soften into forgiveness of the unconscious petitioner before him. But, with him, the doing of a thing meant the doing of it once for all and entirely; so, having fairly reached a decision, it was with an unclouded brow, and a smile which had no trace of hardness, that he offered his hand to Egerton's grasp, saying:

"Never mind, Fred, I'll call you no harder name than a simple fellow who doesn't know his best friend. I was on your side from the first."

"I know you were," put in Fred, remorsefully. "She told me as much, just now—and—and—she wants me to bring my cousin and hers back with me."

"Indeed?" observed Ray, mischievously, marking a sudden accession of color upon the swarthy cheek. "Then suppose we go at once to our cousin!"

And, through the soft summer day, the three walked homeward together, as merrily as if their peace and happiness had not been so lately endangered by "Trifles light as Air."